UNIVERZITA KARLOVA V PRAZE

Filozofická fakulta
Ústav anglofonních literatur a kultur

Diplomová Práce

Nina Makelberge

Vnímání přírody

Výklad mýtotvorby R.W.Emersona

Experiencing Nature

Reading of R.W. Emerson's Mythopoeia

Praha, 2009

Vedoucí práce: Prof. PhDr. Martin Procházka, CSc.

Mé poděkování patří vedoucímu práce PhDr. Martinu Procházkovi za odborné vedení a podporu.

Prohlašuji, že jsem tuto diplomovou práci vypracovala samostatně a výhradně s použitím citovaných pramenů, literatury a dalších odborných zdrojů.

V Praze ....

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ABBREVIATIONS OF PRIMARY SOURCES

N …… *Nature*. Ralph Waldo Emerson, Boston: 1836.

C …… "Circles": *Essays*. R. W. E., Boston: 1841.

MN…….. "The Method of Nature". R. W. E., delivered at Waterville College in Maine, 1841.

P…… "The Poet": *Essays: Second Series*. R.W. E., Boston: 1844.

E…… "Experience": *Essays: Second Series*. R.W. E., Boston: 1844.

PI…….. "Poetry and Imagination": *Letters and Social Aims*. R. W. E., Boston: 1875.

EaP…… *Essays and Poems of Ralph Waldo Emerson*. Ed. Tony Tanner. London: J.M. Dent, 1995.

EaL…….*Essays and Lectures of Ralph Waldo Emerson*. Ed. Joel Porte. New York: Library of America, 1983.

TW……. American Transcendentalism Web, 1. Jun. 2009 <http://www.vcu.edu/engweb/transcendentalism/authors/emerson/essays/poetryimag.html >

INTRODUCTION

According to theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer, "ideas look very different in the ripeness of their maturity than in the freshness of their birth"[1]; this observation is particularly pertinent to the work of Ralph Waldo Emerson, not only on the level of his own literary development, but also within the context of his evolving culture. Within the field of modern literary criticism and American cultural studies, the work of R.W. Emerson is primarily regarded and classfied as the prototype of the pragmatic theory. However, the over-emphasis of Emerson's forecasting of the American Pragmatism indeed overcasts the nascence of those very ideas which in their origin embody the idea of "transformation".

As significant is the fact that America was born at the Age of Reason and in the early nineteenth century gained headship in all things having to do with technology -- settings its course for its pragmatic, modern endeavors -- another significant factor played a determining role in its forming "modernity": its direct encounter with the fiction-enticing space of the "New World". Taken together both factors generated the dramatic change of consciousness, where the new and altered perspectives of the world demanded man's new relation to his environment -- instigating a translation of the original ideas into the new apprehensions, in other words, creating new world-views and myths. Emerson was, as is recognized, an important part of this "translating" activity but what is more important is that he was himself gradually becoming aware of it; seriously investigating the effect of the mythopoeic power both on his work and in human life in general. Therefore, a single interpretation of his body of work is in contrast to his ambition to explicate the workings of myth and its transitional means. Hence, this study attempts to reveal Emerson's text in the light of his mythopoeic interest and to demonstrate that unity was as important for his work as multiplicity, stagnation as well as action, for it is always in the way of transition that Emerson recognized mythopoeia to take its course. More over, this study attempts to outline -- in order to point out -- to what extend his own theory of mythopoeic and symbolic expression anticipated America's own growing awareness of the importance of the mythic and imaginative expression for the human experience. Kenneth Burke in what appears as direct exaltation of

[1] As quoted in Roger Lundin's *From Nature to Experience: American Search for Cultural Authority* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2005) 4; hereafter cited in the text as Lundin.

Emerson's notion of symbolic expression, implied in his work *Language as Symbolic Action* that,

> humanity would do well to picture nature as a dynamic, creative process rather than as an inert, alien realm. It is not a question of an idea being abstract true or false, it is a question of an idea making imaginative sense in that it helps us step outside our limited *common-sense* [my emphasis] way of seeing[2].

Perhaps the best way to express this reading's point of interest is as Lewis Mumford pointed out -- strangely but most poignantly -- through the words of a scholar who placed little value to Emerson's thoughts and methods[3], George Edward Woodberry. "[…] By the features of this doctrine", Woodberry wrote of Emerson's essays,

> its mingling of physics and being, its divorce from Christian mythology, its freedom from past civilization, its priority to science and logic, its truly primitive methods of thought in conducting the mind still untrained and still grasping knowledge imperfectly, one is reminded of the early sages of Greece […].[4]

Indeed, for in both cases, agreeing with Mumford's interpretation, this originality and imperfection are the markers of the embryonic expression of a new culture[5]. What Woodberry aimed to be a negative evaluation of Emerson's work actually points out the very way of transition embedded in Emerson's creative impulse.

The discussion and explication of the study is centered on Emerson's essays for in this form of narrative Emerson was able to best explore and demonstrate the mythopoeic function; not only through the import of their meaning but also through stylistic and expressive rendering on the textual surface. His essays *Nature* and "Experience" were chosen to serve as the main models for demonstrating Emerson's exploration of the mythopoeic function, because not only do they well reflect Emerson's own developing ideas on myth but they stand as epitome of mythopoeia's double connotation: both destructive and liberating in its nature. Other essays that were included in the study were those that are important pieces in tracing the progressive development of Emerson's particular theory of symbolic expression: "Circles" from his *Essays*, "The Poet" and "Nature" from his *Essays: Second Series*,

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[2] Laurence Coupe, *Myth* (London: Routledge, 2009) 92; hereafter cited in the text as Coupe.
[3] Lewis Mumford, "Introduction": *Emerson's Essays and Journals*, Ed. Lewis Mumford (New York: Doubleday and Co., 1968) 29; hereafter cited in the text as Mumford.
[4] As quoted in Mumford's *Emerson's Essays and Journals*, 29.
[5] Mumford, 29.

and “Poetry and Imagination”- a less known piece, but of particular value for this study. Furthermore, Emerson’s oratory “Method of Nature” constitutes a significant part of the study for supporting the claims made on the grounds of the essays with its important insights into the mythopoeic theme. Additional support and justification was drawn from Emerson’s private writings; being a prolific writer, both in his professional and private life, his journal entries, letters and other, less directly relevant, essays supplied pertinent contributions to the topic.

Before conducting the actual interpretation of the “Emersonian essay” in connection to the mythopoeic faculty, which is undertaken in chapter 2, an overview is provided in chapter 1 of myth’s definition and place within modern literary criticism and philosophy. Its purpose is to introduce, in light of Emerson’s own exploration, the central problems and debates associated to the subject. Chapter 3 further expands on the contribution of mythopoeia to Emerson’s style, use and formation of his particular theory of symbolic expression and pointing out its link to contemporary literary theories concerning imagination and fiction. The last chapter is dedicated to tracing parallels between Emerson’s anticipation of mythopoeia’s importance within human experience and modernity’s growing interest in the necessity of mythopoeia and mythic narratives for human subsistence -- particularly as exemplified in the work of Clifford Geertz and his approach to anthropological research.

CHAPTER 1: MYTHOS

Before going any further into the study of the mythological dimension of Emerson's works, it is necessary to define the terms "myth" and "mythology" as well as to locate their place in and relevance to both literary and cultural studies. Defining "myth" is not a simple matter for the term seems to have gained a valency for a number of varied definitions. For F. Max Müller, for example, the mythical world is essentially a world of illusion caused by a language's inherent defect [6] - "disease of language"[7]. On the other hand, for the German Romantics myth presented the highest mode of truth[8]. René Wellek and Austin Warren in their *Theory of Literature* agree that the "term is not easy to fix"[9]:

> […] In the 17th and 18th centuries […] the term had commonly a pejorative connotation: a myth was a fiction – scientifically or historically untrue. But already in the "Scienza Nuova" of Vico, the emphasis has shifted to what since the German Romantics, Coleridge, Emerson, and Nietzsche, has become gradually dominant – the conception of 'myth' as, like poetry, a kind of truth or equivalent of truth, not a competition to historic or scientific truth but a supplement.[10]

In addition, already from the time of Nietzsche's philosophy, this supposed antinomy of fiction and truth itself comes to a radical reconsideration. Therefore, the only manner by which to attain a proper conception of "myth" is to not conceive of it as defining a single fixed concept but standing for special state of consciousness demarcated not by the contraposition of the opposing poles of "fictitiousness" and "reality" -- for that very opposition is, as Wolfgang Iser points out, a "tacit knowledge" a "storehouse of beliefs that seem so soundly based that their truth may be taken for granted"[11], which already implies a certain degree of mythologizing -- but by the interaction of the two. The following sections attempt to exemplify the shifting stance towards this state, to portray how the change of consciousness' attitude

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[6] Ernst Cassirer, *Language and Myth*, trans. Susanne K. Langer (New York: Dover Publications, 1953), 7; hereafter cited in the text as Cassirer.
[7] Burton Feldman and Robert D. Richardson Jr., *The Rise of Modern Mythology* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1972) 481; hereafter cited in the text as Feldman and Richardson.
[8] Feldman and Richardson, 303.
[9] Austin Warren and René Wellek. *Theory of Literature* (London: Peregrine Books, 1963) 191; hereafter cited in the text as Warren and Wellek.
[10] Warren, and Wellek, 191.
[11] Wolfgang Iser, *The Fictive and the Imaginary: Charting Literary Anthropology* (London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993) 1; hereafter cited in the text as Iser.

towards the relationship between "myth" and "reality" demonstrates the transformations and complexities of the mythologizing activity itself.

1.1 MYTHOCLASM

Beginning with F. Max Müller's "disease of language", myth by certain mythological approaches earned this unflattering characterization for its property to affect the "proper" function of language. In case of Müller coming from a hard-headed philological position[12], his famous comparative study of the Greek myths and Aryan languages, where he explained Greek myths based on etymological parallels to their Aryan origins, lead him to conclude that there is always a slippage between words and things - an inherent weakness of language[13] - and this linguistic ambiguity is the source of all myths[14]. Myth for Müller is "the dark shadow which language throws upon thought, and which can never disappear till language becomes entirely commensurate with thought, which it never will"[15]. The only way, in Müller's point of view, to overcome this imprecision of language is through comparative philology, conceived of as a sort of scientific etymology: "to find a supposedly disinterested and scientific method"[16].

F. Max Müller was writing at a time what Robert D. Richardson called,

> […] a second Enlightenment […;] The later 19th century […] assessment of myth may be described as a revival of rationalism, […] that confined its serious interest in myth to anthropology and gave myth back to the not very highly esteemed 'savage mind'[17].

Indeed, it was during the period of Enlightenment that aimed, through the progressive operations of critical reason, at "human emancipation from myth", superstition and captivation of nature's mysterious powers[18]. During the periods of Enlightenment and the Victorian Age myth posed a threat to the times' rationalistic and genteel mind sets, in each case there was a "systematic attempt to explain away mythology"[19] and

[12] Feldman and Richardson, 481.
[13] Feldman and Richardson, 480.
[14] Cassirer, 4.
[15] Cassirer, 5.
[16] Feldman and Richardson, 482.
[17] Feldman and Richardson, 483.
[18] Thomas Docherty quoted in Coupe's *Myth*, 110.
[19] Coupe, 10.

one can begin to see, as Richardson claims, "a process at work simplifying, refining, and bowdlerizing myth for popular consumption"[20].

However, along side the trend to deride myth and its seriousness a counter current that considers myth other than a "defect" of the mind has not completely been subverted. In fact, important to point out for our later discussion, the very extreme emphasis placed on reason is paradoxically what has propelled myth in its other understanding – not as a hindrance to knowledge but its liberator. Particularly one philosopher of the times of rational and scientific inquiry serves as the epitome example of this paradox. Through the 18th century, mythology served the rationalist purpose as a rich source of parallels and counterclaims upsetting to revealed religion; in the philosophy of David Hume however, "for the first time in any significant way" myth becomes embarrassing for free thought and atheism, and for rationality as well[21]. Although Hume still maintained enlightenment's contempt for myth (found it of no intellectual value) he saw in it not just an impediment for religion but for rationality as well. Particularly in his "Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion" where Hume is arguing against dogmatism either of a rational or religious kind, he implies a novel view of myth[22]: by arguing that knowledge is limited to experience, he opens the way for myth to gain a status of own autonomy and not inferior to rationality. This, although only implied view, remained in Ernst Cassirer's judgment an isolated event in the Enlightenment because the "century still believed in the power of reason too much to follow Hume in renouncing it"[23]. Nevertheless, it was Hume's relentless skepticism, attacking all authority over man's knowledge of the world, that tapped the surface for "the remarkable freedom and urgency with which post-Kantian and Romantic mythologists"[24] broke through to myth for the very means to counter the rationalists' philosophies. Emerson was well read in Hume's philosophy and he "struggled against Hume for years"[25]. To a great extent, as will be examined in more detail in later chapter, Emerson's life and work constituted a refutation of the skepticism represented by Hume, which consequently lead to Emerson's own exercise in myth and development of ideas on the subject of mythology.

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[20] Feldman and Richardson, 300.
[21] *Ibid.*, 157.
[22] *Ibid.*, 158.
[23] *Ibid.*, 160.
[24] *Ibid.*, 160.
[25] Richardson, Robert D, Jr., *Emerson:The Mind on Fire* (Berkley: University of California Press, 1995), 31; hereafter cited in the text as Richardson.

1.2 MYTHOPOEIA

The one source of affirmation Emerson found for his own intuitive inquiry into the subject of myth was in the works of the German Romantics; but as René Wellek points out in his *Confrontations*:

> Emerson, one feels, was looking among the Germans [Schelling, Hegel, Herder, the list is significant] for support for his faith. He found it there, and that is why he praised them, though mostly from a distance. He was not interested in the process of their thinking. He was merely interested in their results, which seemed to him a confirmation of a world view which contradicted and refuted the materialism of the 18th century.[26]

As both René Wellek and M.H. Abrams have portrayed, myth becomes a major concern of Romantic thinking and literature. Particularly in the German Romantic movement, although of short duration, myth was raised to a prominent status; asserted and celebrated not only the body of knowledge presented by the collections of myths - their narrative, linguistic and historical specifics, but more importantly, newly, for representing a *mode of knowledge* that would counterbalance and "revitalize the material and mechanical universe which had emerged" from the rationalist theories particularly "[…] dramatized in the later 18th century".[27] What was a common mission for the Romantics was essentially, as M.H. Abrams claims, for "healing":

> [….] an attempt to overcome the sense of man's alienation from the world by healing the cleavage between subject and object, between the vital, purposeful, value-full world of private experience and the dead postulated world of extension, quantity, and motion. To establish that man shares his own life with the nature was to reanimate the dead universe of the materialists, and at the same time most effectively to tie man back into his milieu.[28]

The writers and thinkers of this movement searched for new modes of organizing experience, new ways of seeing the outer world and "a new set of relations of the

[26] René Wellek,. *Confrontations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1965), 202; hereafter cited in the text as *Confrontations*.
[27] M.H. Abrams, *The Mirror and the Lamp:Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition* (New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 1958), 65; hereafter cited in the text as *The Mirror*.
[28] *The Mirror*, 65.

individual to himself, to nature to history and to his fellow men"[29]. In myth they found the synthesizing ground on which to formulate their ambitions, for to them myth points back to what poetry seemed to be in the primal beginnings of the human race, a unity of thought, art and belief[30].

Such unity is what Friedrich Schlegel hoped be realized for the modern future. Unity he regarded as the most vital part of art, philosophy and understanding in general and thus it was not enough to merely be sensitive to beautiful passages and fragments (both in works of art and in life) but be able to seize the impression of the whole, "since the first condition of all understanding, and hence also of the understating of a work or art, is an intuition of the whole."[31] But this is what he felt lacking at his time: "absence of a firm basis […], a matrix, a sky, a living atmosphere […] as mythology provided for the ancients"[32]. His famous statement of this "modern" hope for new mythology he put forward in the "Athenaum" where he calls for a "progressive universal poetry"[33] :

> Such poetry of art, deliberately breaking the limits set in the past, will blend philosophy with poetry, will blend all genres, will reconcile all dualities, and will realize all possibilities.[34]

Schlegel found "literature" too narrow to meet his intentions and "religion" too orthodox, but myth fit his "new meaning ideally because myth joined literature and religion inseparably by illuminating for modernity the missing link between art and faith"[35]. However, as Wellek points out, Schlegel "[…] does not mean by myth merely a new cosmology or an exploitation of philosophical concepts; he thinks of it, rather, as a system of correspondences and symbols"[36]; a new system of relationships, a "hieroglyphical expression of surrounding nature"[37] brought to light and being by individual spirit or inspiration. The "disorder that might originate from the abundance

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[29] M.H. Abrams, *Natural Supernaturalism: Tradition and Revolution in Romantic Literature* (New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 1971), 14; hereafter cited in the text as *Natural Supernaturalism*.
[30] Feldman and Richardson, 307.
[31] *Ibid.*
[32] Friedrich Schlegel, "Talk on Mythology" [trans. Ernst Behler and Roman Struc], *The Rise of Modern Mythology*. Ed. B. Feldman and R.D. Richardson Jr., 310; hereafter cited in the text as "Talk on Mythology".
[33] Friedrich Schlegel, "The Athenaeum: Aphorism no. 116" [trans. Ernst Behler and Roman Struc], *The Rise of Modern Mythology*. Ed. B. Feldman and R.D. Richardson Jr., 313.
[34] Feldman and Richardson, 307.
[35] *Ibid.*
[36] "Talk on Mythology", 312.
[37] René Wellek, *A History of Modern Criticism, vol..II* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1970), 17; hereafter quoted in text as *A History of Modern Criticism, vol. II*.

from [such] poetic creations"[38] to Schlegel represents the truly fertile and creative medium: for "the highest beauty, indeed the highest order is yet only that of chaos, namely of such a one that waits only for the touch of love to unfold as a harmonious world, of such a chaos as the ancient mythology and poetry were"[39]. For Schlegel the "unity" of the universe has to do with the synthesis of the individual spirit with nature through the force of love. In connection to this, Schlegel raises an important point: the evidence that in essence the world is paradoxical and man is driven for it's overcoming is made evident by the function of irony: "Irony is a clear consciousness of the infinitely full chaos […]"[40] but it is also highly self-conscious, a self-parody, as he says, "transcendental buffoonery"[41]. On the other hand, "love […] is the human equivalent to the mysterious principle of organic form"[42] thus individuals may follow nature in structure and organization in the causation of love[43]. Through this scheme of forces Schlegel envisions a synthesis between the ideal and the real - that a new mythology "will emerge from such grounds based on the harmony of the ideal and real"[44].

For other reason that myth became an essential part to the German Romantics' (for Romantics in general) agenda, was for its aid in the move from conventional religion. As Abrams reminds,

> the process [of progressive secularization] […] has not been the deletions and replacement of religious ideas but rather the assimilation and reinterpretation of religious ideas, as constitutive elements in a world view founded on secular premises.[45]

Abrams continues to highlight the fact that much of the Romantic writers

> undertook, whatever their religious creed or lack of creed, to save traditional concepts, schemes, and values which had been based on the relation of the Creator to his creatures and creation, but to reformulate them within prevailing two-term system of subject and object, ego-non ego, the human mind or consciousness and its transaction with nature.[46]

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[38] "Talk on Mythology", 310.
[39] *Ibid.*
[40] Schlegel as quoted in Wellek's A *History of Modern Criticism, vol.II*, 15.
[41] *Ibid.*
[42] Zdeněk Hrbata, a Martin Procházka, *Romantismus a romantismy: Pojmy, Proudy, Kontexty* (Prague: Charles Univesity Press, 2005), 193; hereafter cited in the text as Hrbata and Procházka.
[43] Hrbata and Procházka, 193.
[44] "Talk on Mythology", 310.
[45] *Natural Supernaturalism*, 13.
[46] *Natural Supernaturalism*, 14.

In other words, again pointing out the need the Romantics felt to conceive of a "new world view" but essentially, as Feldman and Richardson, proclaim: "[…] myth was a major vehicle by which Christianity was secularized into romanticism"[47]. Particularly in the works of Friedrich W. J. Schelling we can observe the conscious use of myth for this transformation of religious ideas and imagery.

As did Schlegel, Schelling stressed the nature as an organic spiritualized realm and for him human consciousness was a higher stage beyond nature, most importantly though, he described both as resulting from God's creative self-unfolding[48]. The supreme tool for understanding this creative Spirit or Will is for Schelling found in art; and myth he regards as the primal expression of art on one side, and as its ultimate culmination on the other. Schelling felt that this culmination could be rendered in a total metaphysical system, the result of which -- "System of Transcendental Idealism" -- expands on the concept of idealism of a striving, "self-transcending human subject into a creatively striving, self-transcending Absolute Mind or Spirit"[49]. Spirit is what comes to know itself by objectifying itself[50]. Very important part to this system is Schelling's idea that Spirit moves through distinct, progressive stages – not merely stages in history, but what he calls "potencies", ascending levels of spiritual possibility[51]; "first the Spirit moves into the objectively real, or Nature; then into subjectivity, or human consciousness as it grasps the ideal; but then into the still higher recognition of the identity between the ideal and real."[52] He regards this whole process the "poetry" of the Spirit because it shows how Spirit is "literally 'making' itself real"[53]. In this system Nature as such is therefore still the primitive, unconscious poetry of the Spirit but man is nature grown into consciousness[54]. Schelling thus then reaches by his own means an agreement with Schlegel that art in its essentially mythical function is the "mediatress between, and reconcile of nature and man."[55] This relation between mythology and revelation that the Romantics accentuated in their works is all-important for discussing the role of myth for Emerson in the context of his nation's Puritan heritage.

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[47] Feldman and Richardson, 298.
[48] *Ibid.*, 315.
[49] *Ibid.*, 317.
[50] *Ibid.*
[51] *Ibid.*
[52] *Ibid.*, 316.
[53] *Ibid.*, 317
[54] *Ibid.*
[55] *The Mirror*, 50.

1.3 CHAOSMOS

Despite the Romantics' aim to out-do scientific rationalism with their stress on the qualities of poetry, their outcome of "systems" speaks of the fact that the very subject matter of myth instigates a need for an arrangement a method of some kind. Perhaps Umberto Eco's term "chaosmos"[56] speaks the best for these "systems" that assumes both order and disorder simultaneously. The very "subject" of the Romantics' systems, as it appears, begins in contradictions and paradoxes, using Schelling's words:

> contradiction is life's main spring and core […]. If there were only unity, and if everything were at peace, then truly nothing would want to stir, and everything would sink into listlessness.[57]

In fact, as Abrams describes, "the system of Romantic philosophy […] is itself represented as a moving system […]"[58]. Here pointing-out yet another paradox - the system itself is ceaselessly changing; a moving system which is "driven by an internal source of motion to its own completion"[59]. In fact the system is a process, an "immanently propelled and ever evolving process of oppositions, reconciliations, and renewed oppositions, moving toward a final state in which all oppositions will be reconciled"[60]. For the Romantics, these contradictions are caused by man's consciousness to reflect "sundering the eternal and original unity"[61] of the Spirit which thus manifests itself in its divided subject-object form both in the realm of nature and of mind. Thus, essentially, as for example Schelling exemplified, in the "Romantic as in Neoplatonic thought, division, separateness, externality, isolation are equated with evil"[62]; however, a "necessary evil" because, without this division caused by human consciousness there would not be the freedom to take action which is according to Schelling the essence of being human[63]. This initiates the move to the

[56] Umberto Eco's description of Joyce's *Finnegans Wake* in *The Aesthetics of Chaosmos: The Middle Ages of James Joyce* (London: Hutchinson Radius, 1989).
[57] Friedrich Schelling as quoted in Wellek's *Natural Supernaturalism*, 173.
[58] *Natural Supernaturalism*. 172.
[59] *Ibid.*
[60] *Ibid.*
[61] Schelling as quoted in Abrams'.*Natural Supernaturalism*, 180.
[62] *Natural Supernaturalism*, 181.
[63] Hrbata and Procházka, 31.

individual experience as the central to the Romantic's concern. Thus, essentially "for Schelling", using Procházka's key description,

> nature is a virtual structure the realization of which renders the creation and limits of our experience; […] nature thus is the realm outside of man yet consequently "the world of human experience[64].

Thus, Myth or Poetry, in other words language employed intuitively and imaginatively, was the one mode for the Romantics which was able to heal this "malignity" of separation, because myth's ability to reconcile "the finite with the infinite, the shaping of divine power into form".[65] For the Romantics, only through such process that would not do away with the differences but use them to strive for "unity which is higher, […] [because incorporating] the intervening differentiations"[66] "can then man return to nature in triumph."[67]

In the "chaosmos" of the Romantic systems already some prefiguring of the development of the modern approaches to the concept and genre of "fiction" can be traced. The Romantic's idealism with its stress on the creative and imaginative facets of language lead to a re-evaluation of the actual "idealism"; if in fact these facets are as "un-realistic" as supposed. It was Nietzsche who garnered the results of these polemics concluding, as Hans Vaihinger sums up:

> That life and science are not possible without imaginary or false conceptions […]. […T]hat this 'invented' world [reality] is a justified and 'indispensable' 'myth'; from which it finally follows that 'false' and 'true' are 'relative' concepts.[68]

This variance on myth's status promoted a third alternative view, one that neither can reject myth for its falseness nor uphold myth as some "higher" truths, for it is a necessary formative agent of the human experience of the world. Thus, ultimately for Nietzsche the "fictive" is to not be discredited but looked at as "[…] to what extent is it advantageous to life"[69]. As Wolfgang Iser explained, it is when "usage" takes over "knowledge" that fiction takes on new significance[70]. For Ernst Cassirer such neo-Kantian stance is an essential point of view on understanding myth because from this conception: "myth […]appears as symbol; not in the sense of mere figure which refer

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[64] Hrbata and Procházka, 30.
[65] Feldman and Richardson, 317.
[66] *Natural Supernaturalism*, 186.
[67] Feldman and Richardson, 317.
[68] Hans Vaihinger, *The Philosophy of "As If"*, trans. C.K. Ogden (London: Routledge, 2001), 342; hereafter cited in the text as Vaihinger.
[69] Nietzsche as quoted in Vaihinger, 354.
[70] Iser, 117.

to some given reality by means of suggestion and allegorical rendering, but in the sense of *forces* [my emphasis] [that]posit a world of its own"[71]. Here we are reminded of Procházka's rendering of Schelling's system as "a virtual structure" where "truth" is bonded to the specific realizations of its potential within experience. This perhaps is most acutely rendered in the philosophy of the "As – If" of Hans Vaihinger, who as Iser explains, saw, as Kant did, through the illusion of the world as being the result of the "ideating, fictionalizing consciousness"[72]. However, apart from just seeing through it he considered and formulated its vital, practical importance to human life.

Compared to the German Romantics, for whom the idea of creating a new "chaosmos" was for the purpose of achieving their main goal: the emergence of new unity, the English Romantics used the concept of creating a new universe to illuminate the very process of such creation[73]. For example Hrbata and Procházka demonstrate how Coleridge's inclusion of a fictitious letter from a friend giving him advice about his literary work in the eight chapter of his "Biographia Literaria" is not just a "mere deception to get away from a philosophical elaboration of his theory on imagination, but a gesture of creative freedom"[74]. This gesture then represents a realm of its own implying a new and

> profound meaning of imagination. […] It is a fragment, which seeks a new form of content, a form that "mobilize[s] the whole by the very act of variedly breaking it.[75]

Perhaps the epitome example of such "chaosmic" ambition is William Blake's prophetic poems. Contrary to the German's emphasis on gaining a new ground for unity and harmony, Blake in fact finds such aims blinding and dangerous[76]. He employed myth for what he found the most important purpose, "fragmentary creation of the universe in all its plurality and diversity"[77]. As Procházka point's out, Blake's mythic vision does not represent mere allegory "which always stand[s] for something else (character personalities, moral and religious truths, philosophical concepts, Ideas, God) but for a "vision creating worlds, which do not exist anywhere but within

[71] Cassirer, 7.
[72] Hans Vaihinger as quoted in Iser, 130.
[73] *Natural Supernaturalism*, 283.
[74] Hrbata and Procházka, 189.
[75] Maurice Blanchot as quoted in Hrbata and Procházka, 189.
[76] Hrbata and Procházka, 208.
[77] *Ibid.*

itself"[78]. Burton Feldman further emphasizes the point Procházka made in connection to Coleridge's mystification: "Taken together, [Blake's] poems set forth a new cosmogony, and interpretation of man's creation […]."[79] Just as the other Romantics attempted to retain the Christian values in a new format Blake sought to do the same, but again through only unfamiliar means, "claiming to find support for a mythic revision of Christian tradition in its heresiarchal side."[80] For Blake the eminent wisdom lies in this acknowledgement and emanation of this diversity of perspectives. In his words: "the Eye altering alters all."[81] This "altering" power is the dynamic process caused by the ceaseless energy of life and conjuring of a mythical vision, i.e. making the world anew, is "his battle against the constraining command of rational thought" [82] and remains one of the most important themes of his prophetic poetry[83]. On such ground the prophet is equaled to the poet, Blake makes these two converge together, for to see the world anew is equal to making the world anew[84]: "the poem-in-being is its own and utterly self-sufficient world"[85]. Thus important differentiation is made here for mythology; rather then mythology presenting something as "being" it encapsulates the power of "becoming" or in other words, mythology stands for "the creative act by which a poet, emulating Divinity, brings possibility over into the realm of being"[86].

Wolfgang Iser in his *The Fictive and the Imaginary* explains, that "it is a character of all true fictions, that they contain contradictions"[87] and it is such "crossing of boundaries" that modern conceptions of "fictionalization" have in common:

> Just as the fictionalizing act outstrips the determinacy of the real, so it provides the imaginary with the determinacy that it would not otherwise possess. In so doing, it enables the imaginary to take on an essential quality of the real, for determinacy is a minimal definition of reality. This is not, of course, to say that the imaginary *is* real, although it certainly assumes an appearance of reality in the way it intrudes into and acts upon the given world.

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[78] Hrbata and Procházka, 207.
[79] Feldman and Richardson, 290
[80] *Ibid.*
[81] Blake, William, "The Mental Traveller,"*William Blake: Selected Poetry and Prose*, ed. By David Fuller, (London: Longman, 2008), 276.
[82] Hrbata and Procházka, 212.
[83] *Ibid.*
[84] *Natural Supernaturalism*, 366
[85] *The Mirror,* 283.
[86] Bodmer and Bretinger, as quoted in Abrams' *The Mirror and the Lamp*. 288.
[87] Iser, 146.

> […] Reproduced reality is made to point to a 'reality' beyond itself, while the imaginary is lured into form. In each case there is a crossing of boundaries: the determinacy of reality is exceeded at the same time that the diffuseness of the imaginary is controlled and called into form. Consequently, extratextual reality merges into imaginary, and the imaginary merges into reality.[88]

If for the German Romantics the act of mythopoeia revealed God's self-unfolding, in the case of modern fiction the boundary-crossing as Iser explains, "opens the complexities of action" [89] and thus "cannot have the nature of an object, because it is an imaginary construct that sets free possibilities inherent in situations and does not pin them down to any pre given conditions"[90], in this case, not revealing the Ideal but the actuality of the presence[91]. However, Iser's regard of fiction being a "sort of repair kit for conceptualization"[92] is appropriate for both movements, for in either case it presents an act "[which] must inevitably transcend the concepts it seeks to encompass"[93]. In Emerson's work on the subject we may observe the point of transition from the religious ambitions of the Romantics to the psycho-literary theories (for example of Ernst Cassirer, Kenneth Burke or Wolfgang Iser); or rather in his philosophy the two converge into his own distinctive "chaosmos" of literary expression.

1.4 THE NEW SCIENCE

After considering German Romantics' insistence on creating a new mode or system of understanding, which Martin Procházka -- pointing out its paradoxical character -- fittingly calls it, using Gilles Deleuze's term, not "transcendental idealism" but "transcendental empiricism"[94] it is pertinent to discuss the parallel intentions of the precedent, bold and original works of Giambattista Vico. Although coming from a setting of 17th century rationalism Vico's thoughts on myth anticipated much of 19th and 20th century interest in poetry and mythology, particularly for

[88] Iser, 3.
[89] *Ibid.*
[90] *Ibid.*
[91] *Ibid.*, 6-7.
[92] *Ibid.*, 165.
[93] *Ibid.*
[94] Hrbata and Procházka, 30.

presenting the first instance where myth is regarded as an autonomous for itself[95]. Although his fame begins with the Romantic period, where his work provided the Romantics with motifs to serve their antirationalist or antiscientific intentions, what essentially was at the heart of his interest was to develop (exceptionally to both Romantics and the Rationalists) "new science" that would not ignore or reject myth, but understand myth; "for Vico, no true human science is possible or worthy unless it can account for why human society necessarily involved myth, and this neither the natural law rationalist not the Christians could do."[96] Vico instead of the 17th century focus on nature as a separate entity from the human with its own laws (Descartes, Hobbes, Spinoza) emphasized the reverse: that the spiritual or human can now be seen as free from rigid obedience to nature's law, thus turning the scientific enquiry inwards. For him humanity needs to be explored in terms of how it necessarily develops ideas, expresses them and perpetuates them, and myth was the key to this understanding. Vico declares in his "New Science": "science must begin where its subject matter begins"[97]. Thus, as Feldman explains, Vico's most important effect is his proclamation that our whole civilized and rational world springs from the fist step forward, and by grasping what caused this first all-important event, we can grasp the principle by which humanity in general begins and develops[98]: "true science of humanity does not begin with men more or less rational and fully humanized, but with mythic men as they in fact were - Vico says, […] insensate and horrible beasts"[99]. Hence, for Vico,

> poetic wisdom, the first wisdom of the gentile world, must have begun with a metaphysics not rational and abstract like that of learned men now, but felt and imagined as that of these first men must have been, who without power of ratiocination, were all robust sense and vigorous imagination.[100]

Vico then establishes the foundation for the "expressive theory"[101], where the primal language of poetry comes from the very passions of man himself in response to the

[95] Feldman and Richardson, 50.
[96] Feldman and Richardson, 51.
[97] Giambattista Vico, "The New Science" [trans. G.Bergin and M.H. Fisch] *The Rise of Modern Mythology*. Ed. B. Feldman and R.D. Richardson Jr., 58; hereafter cited in the text as "The New Science."
[98] Feldman and Richardson, 52.
[99] *Ibid.*
[100] "The New Science," 58.
[101] *The Mirror*, 79-80.

frightening and awe-inspiring surrounding of his natural world[102]. Poetry or myth is thus the "master key" to the origins of humanity[103]. Vico by laying the ground for the synthesizing of the two seeming contraries anticipates the later approaches to mythology; implicitly in the case of the Romantic's, like Schelling's and Schlegel's "psycho-natural parallelism"[104] of their systems; but the modern approaches particularly, such as Jung's psychological approach, psycho-linguistic studies of Ernst Cassirer, Hans Vaihinger's phenomenology of "As-If", myth as semiological system in works of Roland Barthes and Claude Lévi-Strauss for example, and Clifford Geertz's phenomenology of culture, are the outcome of the tendency to "naturalize the supernatural, and humanize the divine."[105]

The other important contribution of Vico's "New Science" to the subject of myth is his situating a correspondence between myth and language. Through his presentation of cultural development as a cyclic structure, he originally, as Hayden White in his presentation of the "New Science" in *The Tropics of History* emphasized, considers:

> speech itself [as providing] the key for interpreting cultural phenomena and the categories by which the evolutionary stages of a given culture can be characterized.[106]

Vico puts forward that it is through the capabilities of the language of a given stage in the cycle that create the world[107]. He developed an analogous model where "the theory of metaphorical transformation serves as the model for a theory of the autotransformation of human consciousness in history."[108] What is important to emphasize here of Vico's contribution for our later discussion, is the development of the idea of myth's narrative structure as reflecting not merely unquestionable truths/illusion but rather anthropological and historical needs.

Johann Gottfried Herder expanding first on Vico's ideas was to assert that all myth not only seems alive and true to its believers, but indeed is true. In the line with Blake's cosmologies that represent the varied perspective of Experience, Herder

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[102] Hrbata and Prochazka, 23.
[103] Feldman and Richardson, 53.
[104] a term used by M.H.Abrams in his discussion of Schelling in *The Mirror and the Lamp*, 52.
[105] *Natural Supernaturalism,* 67.
[106] White, Hayden. "The Tropics of History: The Deep Structure of The *New* Science", *The Tropics of Discourse:Essays in Cultural Criticism* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), 203; hereafter cited in the text as White.
[107] White, 203.
[108] *Ibid*., 205.

continues the discussion, remarking, and foreshadowing the modernist theories, that "myth then is never simply false, but only relatively so, that is, false to those who have other myths, other world-views"[109]. The concept which for example prompted Vaihinger to condense his investigation of the subject on "activated sensations" [110]: for "[o]nly what is felt, what confronts us in the world of perception, whether it be internal of external, is real"[111].

What is implied in the tracings of these developments is that consequently myth has become to be conceived as ultimately being about the present moment. Kenneth Burke thinks of myth as "the temporizing of essence"[112]; where it speaks of "origins and 'firsts' […] it is always speaking simultaneously of the nature of things here and now"[113]. It is exactly this temporizing quality of myth that distinguishes it from either poetry or science as both without mythic predication merely present an "empty" thought – either retrospect or prospect, but by the utility of myth may conceive of the "qualitative" knowledge of their essence within a specific experience; because, as according to Ricoeur, the "already" and the "not yet" are only present in the "here and now"[114]. Clifford Geertz expands on this thought by proclaiming that,

> [i]n man neither regnant fields nor mental sets can be formed with sufficient precision in the absence of guidance from symbolic models of emotion. In order to make up our minds we must know how we feel about things; and to know how we feel about things we need the public images of sentiment that only ritual, myth and art provide.[115]

Consequently, this indistinctness, or rather variableness, of the nature of myth's method shifted the discussion from "Truth" versus "Falsity" to what Vaihinger considers "intentionality" of the subjective consciousness' needs at a given moment:

> Cold is a degree of temperature that is unsuitable for us, warm that which is most suitable. The difference between them objectively is merely one of degree. Subjectively the difference can be shifted according to the circumstances and the nature of the object concerned. In the same manner, truth is merely the most expedient degree of error, and error the least expedient degree of ideation, of

[109] Feldman and Richardson, 226.
[110] Iser, 133-134.
[111] Vaihinger, 105.
[112] Kenneth Burke, "Myth, Poetry, and Philosophy", *Language as Symbolic Action: Essays on Life, Literature, and Method* (Berkley: University of California Press, 1968), 381.
[113] Coupe, 81.
[114] Paul Ricoeur's explanation of myth from his *History and Truth* as cited in Coupe's *Myth*.
[115] Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretations of Culture* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 82; hereafter cited in text as Geertz.

> fiction. We call our conceptual world true when it permits us best to gauge objectivity and to act therein.[116]

Roland Barthes describes it as myth's "value":

> Myth is a *value*, truth is no guarantee for it, nothing prevents it from being a perpetual alibi […]. The meaning is always there to present the form, the form is there to outdistance the meaning. And there is never any contradiction. […] Myth is a type of speech defined by its intention. [117]

From here it is only a step away, from the pragmatics' idea of the "cash value" of experience; in which case

> [t]ruth has to do not with the relationship between language and reality, but the effectiveness and profitability of an idea's yield[118].

In this sense the Pragmatist finds irrelevant to ask, as Robert Lundin points out, what is Truth, rather, in what way will the acceptance of truth be realized in a person's experience: "In what way, [William] James ask[ed] will a person's experience be different from those that we would obtain if the belief were false."[119]

If the modern approaches no longer question myth's legitimacy for knowledge in the human experience, it is now inquired as a factor of *modulation* of experience. So as this chapter opened with the discussion of myth's relationship to language, being merely an impenetrable illusion produced by language, we conclude the chapter – 120 years later – with myth taking on the role of a "narration" of experience open for interpretation. For Claude Lévi-Strauss myth does remain an illusion, however, it is an "illusion" with a difference - for that "man can understand the universe and that he does understand the universe"[120] is a "very important illusion"[121] indeed. Lévi-Strauss explains pointing out myth's "fabulous" quality,

> we are becoming more and more interested in this qualitative aspect, and […] science, which had a purely quantitative outlook in the 17th to 19th centuries, is beginning to integrate the qualitative aspects of reality as well. This undoubtedly will enable us to understand a great many things present in

[116] Vaihinger, 108.
[117] Roland Barthes, "Myth Today", Mythologies, trans. Annette Lavers (New York: Hill and Wang, 2001), 123 -124.
[118] Lundin, 34.
[119] Lundin, 34.
[120] Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Myth and Meaning* (London: Routledge, 1978), 13; hereafter cited in the text as Lévi-Strauss.
[121] Lévi-Strauss, 13.

> mythological thinking which we were in the past prone to dismiss as meaningless […][122].

For Lévi-Strauss, the workings of myth represent human mind's basic need for order, emphasizing that "since, after all, the human mind is only part of the universe, the need probably exists because there is some order in the universe and the universe is not chaos"[123]. Thus, myth is considered as a kind of tool or rather a tactic of man's mind "to transform a situation in which there is experienced obscurity […] of some sort, into a situation that is clear, coherent, settled, harmonious"[124]. Lévis-Strauss idea of "bricolage" where the mind composes all its pre-existing ideas to ceaselessly construct for itself "the harmonious world view":

> […] is all a matter of shuffling discrete (and concrete) images –totem animals, sacred colors, wind directions, sun deities, or whatever – so as to produce symbolic structures capable of formulating and communicating objective (which is not to say accurate) analysis of the social and physical worlds.[125]

Although, Lévi-Strauss points out the way myth still remains inferior to science: "myth is unsuccessful in giving man more material power over the environment"[126], on the other hand he admits, the narrow field of vision of scientific thought:

> scientific thinkers […] use very limited amount of […] mental power. [Scientist] use what is needed by [the] profession, […] trade or the particular situation.[127]

He goes on to imply the change of quality of the mind as required by the kind of life and relationship to nature that the people of specific culture have[128]. In fact such reasoning leads to the implication, already delivered by Nietzsche, and expanded on by Vaihinger, that even the scientific oriented mind-set of his time is a mythological assemble.

Lévi-Strauss' use of "bricolage" is reminiscent with Blake's mythological visions, quoting Franz Boas, of the "mythological worlds [that have been] built up, only to be shattered, where the new worlds are built again from its fragments". Perhaps the best word used for this permutational nature of myth is what Clifford Geertz, using John Dewey's quote to illustrate, calls "disposition" of the mind:

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[122] *Ibid.*, 19.
[123] Lévi-Strauss, 9.
[124] John Dewey on reflective thought as quoted in Clifford Geertz's *The Interpretations of Culture*.
[125] Geertz, 353.
[126] Lévi-Strauss, 13.
[127] *Ibid.*
[128] *Ibid*, 15.

> Mind is an 'active and eager background which lies in wait and engages whatever comes its way.' And as such, it is neither an action nor a thing, but an organized system of dispositions which finds its manifestation in some actions and some things[129].

He continues saying,

> the point is that when we attribute mind to an organism, we are talking about neither the organism's actions nor its products, [but] a capacity and a proneness [to perform certain action and produce certain kinds of products][130].

This modern perspective has quite drastically shifted the Romantic outlook on "reflective" thought. However, although headed now under different terms and assigned as agent of the human apparatus rather then of the divine, the concept of the "Will" remains still central to the subject:

> psyche works over the material presented to it by the sensations, i.e. elaborates the only available foundation […].[131]

Or as further exemplified by Geertz:

> It is through culture patterns ordered clusters of significant symbols, that man makes sense of the events through which he lives. The study of […] the accumulated totality of such patterns, is thus the study of the machinery individuals and group of individuals employ to orient themselves in a world otherwise opaque.[132]

or by Barthes by raising an important point that,

> [i]t is certain that in this sense mythology harmonizes with the world, not as it is, but as it wants to create itself […][133]

It is at this point that Barthes introduces also the potential danger of the "Usage" (as Barthes calls it) of myth as an ideological tool:

> Myths are nothing but this ceaseless, untiring solicitation, this insidious and inflexible demand that all men recognize themselves in this image, eternal yet bearing a date, which was built of them one day as if for all time. For the Nature, in why they are lock up under the pre-text of being eternalized, is nothing but an Usage[134].

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[129] Geertz, 58.
[130] Geertz, 59
[131] Vaihinger, 157.
[132] Geertz, 361.
[133] Barthes, 159.
[134] Barthes, 159.

Here, harking back to the well-known mythologizing in the clearly rationalist tradition of Karl Marx, whose "work and influence most powerfully moves myth toward its wide modern usage as a near-synonym of 'ideology': the 'opium of the people'"[135]. His Ideologies, in his words, "illusions of the epoch" are superstructures that reflect but also obscure the true hidden reason and premises of history[136], like class tension, economic structure, material production. For Barthes, myths do not hide however, they simplify and purify due to the very principal of myth to transform history into nature:

> […] In passing from history to nature myth acts economically: it abolishes the complexity of human acts, it gives them the simplicity of essences, it does away with all dialectics, it organizes a world which is without contradictions because it is without depth, a world wide open and wallowing in the evident, it establishes a blissful clarity: things appear to mean something by themselves.[137]

Interesting, however, to point out that despite Barthes' approach to myth coming from an absolutely different point of departure compared to the Romantics, in a certain sense, he reaches an agreement with them, on myth being a mediator to the understanding of the gap between ideas and form. He says,

> mythology is part both of semiology in as much as it is a formal science, and of ideology is as much as it is an historical science: it studies ideas-in-form[138].

Leading him to an interesting twist on the characteristics of poets, who

> of all those who use speech […] are the least formalist, for they are the only one who believe that the meaning of the words is only a form, which they, being realist, cannot be content.[139]

How interesting that the very idealist intentions, of the romantic transcendental poetry, in fact leads to them being the most "realist" of all users of language. This illustrates well myth's exceptional nature and validity, leading us to consent with Barthes' conclusion that ultimately "[m]yth hides nothing and flaunts nothing: […] myth is neither a lie nor a confession: it is an inflexion."[140]

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[135] Feldman and Richardson, 488
[136] *Ibid.*
[137] Barthes, 143.
[138] Barthes, 112.
[139] Barthes, 134.
[140] Barthes, 128.

This first chapter serving as an overview of the shifting position of mythology in literary and cultural studies was rendered in the light of the issues and debates central to Emerson's own thoughts and handling of myth. The following chapters will expand on the issues raised in the introduction as particularly reflected by Emerson's writing in hope of revealing the degree of pertinence mythology had for his work, as well as, how his own work stands as a contribution into the topic's incessant tributary. For Emerson was both a "myth critic" and "myth maker" and the following chapters will attempt to explore both qualities respectively to discover mythology as being of central significance to understanding and appreciating the works of "New England's own philosopher-sage"[141].

[141] Joseph Campbell's remark on Emerson in *The Masks of God: Creative Mythology* (London: Penguin Books, 1976), 577.

CHAPTER 2: THE PHILOSOPHER-SAGE

2.1 TRANSFORMATION OF CONSCIOUSNESS

Although, R.W. Emerson never presented himself as a mythologist per se or addressed the subject in his essays ever explicitly, there are clear signs that reveal that already from his boyhood his mind was attracted to characteristically mythological subject matter. As Robert D. Richardson points out in his biography on Emerson, his journal that he composed during his junior year at Harvard, shows

> in the most strongest possible contrast to the rationalist curriculum, […] a marked and steady interest in imagination, in fairyland, in legend, folktale, fiction, and poetry.[142]

Yet a teenager's liking for fantasy and day-dream alone does not stand for a directive in one's mythological inquiry. On the other hand though, Emerson was also a youth whose undergraduate poem about India, "Indian Superstition", shows strong features of "xenophobic, condescending, even racist overview of Indic mythology […]"[143]. This suggests that from early on Emerson was attracted and at the same time repulsed by religious, "mythological", sentiment. He could rave about the elevation of the poet as a prophet, "the gospel maker"[144] but at the same time doubt and ridicule the actual presentations of religious and prophetic texts - be it the ancient Indian poetry or Hebrew texts. It is this love-hate relationship to religion[145] that he developed at an early age that provided the fertile ground from which his intellectual and private meditations sprung forth. Such a mind was very attentive to the historical and scientific discoveries of his time and particularly of interest were the developing theories that put into question the authenticity of the Bible, which consequently lead to his increasing uneasiness with the "mediating agencies of Christian experience, be they sacramental, traditional, or scriptural".[146] For him the "Christian faith became a weary rehearsal of the once-illumination experiences of others"[147]. On the other hand, as engaged in the scientific thought as he was of his day, he was never to leave *his*

[142] Richardson, 11.
[143] Richardson, 8.
[144] For example as exemplified in his poem on liberating poetry from rhyme, written in his junior year at Harvard (see for example *The Complete Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, Centenary Edition, ed. E. W. Emerson. Boston: Hougton Mifflin, 1903- 1904).
[145] Richardson's biography on Emerson well portrays the sources of his early life that further triggered the development of this binary attitude towards religion and spirituality.
[146] Lundin, 51.
[147] Lundin, 51.

own faith for a purely scientific enquiry. He didn't turn to science in hope to find all the evidence to reject spirituality, he turned to it in the faith that the new disciplines would provide confirmation of his sense of the sacred: "The new astronomy had revealed a world and a universe that could no longer usefully be described as fallen".[148] The results of his strong inner spiritual voice and the skeptical eye converged to produce in Emerson the unique quality of an approach to life - perhaps most well expressed through his own words formulated in "The American Scholar: "the ancient precept 'know thyself' and the modern precept 'study nature', become at least one maxim"[149].

It is not mere coincidence then, but rather historically symbolic, that at the time when Emerson was developing his own stance on the matters of identity, religion and authority that America as a nation was undergoing her own "transformation of consciousness"[150]. Alexis de Tocqueville after his visit to the New World wrote in the final chapter of his *Democracy in America*:

> The time will therefore come when one hundred and fifty million men will be living in North America, 100 equal in condition, all belonging to one family, owing their origin to the same cause, and preserving the same civilization, the same language, the same religion, the same habits, the same manners, and imbued with the same opinions, propagated under the same forms. The rest is uncertain, but this is certain; and it is a fact new to the world, a fact that the imagination strives in vain to grasp[151].

As if in a form of reaction to what Tocqueville sensed to be a blankness of the American imagination, caused by the inability to account for the "new facts" emerging from the New World, a year later in his *Nature* Emerson finally proposed: "Why should not we […] enjoy an original relation to the universe?" (N: 7)[152] By proposing that question, in accordance to Sacvan Bercovitch's analogy of the New

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[148] From Emerson's seromon of May 27, 1832, as paraphrased in Richardson's *The Mind on Fire*, 124.
[149] R.W. Emerson, "The American Scholar", *Essays and Lectures*, edited by Joel Porte (New York: Library of America, 1983), 56; hereafter cited in the text as "The American Scholar".
[150] Joseph Campbell's term for radical events/changes in social history that account for myth, see *The Masks of God: Creative Mythology,* Ch. 1, 2 and 10.
[151] Alexis de Tocqueville, "Chapter XVIII" *Democracy in America vol. I*, Electronic Text Center, University of Virginia Library, 12. Apr. 2009 < http://etext.lib.virginia.edu/etcbin/toccer-new2?id=TocDem1.sgm&images=images/modeng&data=/texts/english/modeng/parsed&tag=public&part=19&division=div1 >
[152] *Essays and Lectures,* ed. Joel Porte (New York: Library of America, 1983); hereafter cited in the text as EaL.

World- the "modern world" as the embodiment of the "modern myth"[153], Emerson is the embodiment of that American mythological formation at work; triggering the process that F.O. Matthiessen described as:

> […a] theory of expression […] on which Thoreau built, to which Whitman gave extension, and to which Hawthorne and Melville were indebted by being forced to react against [it][154].

Emerson's sensitive and insightful mind made him aware that there is no adequate *narrative* for the inhabitants of 19th century America as they "scrambled to orient themselves in a cosmos of alarming new proportions"[155]. "The experience of each new age requires a new confession, and the world seems always waiting for its poets" (P: 185)[156], fittingly to his way, Emerson through this performative statement not only constituted the absence but at the same time took on himself the task of filling that void -- a role he later deeply examined through his "Poet" -- of the indispensable messenger:

> […] thought and the form are equal in the order of time, but in the order of genesis the thought is prior to the form. The poet has a new thought: he has a whole new experience to unfold […]. (P: 184)[157]

In his essay Emerson renders "the Poet" in a light similar to the German Romantics', where the poet and the mystic fall together and through their voice of poetry provide the insight into the depth of being – one's own being and Being of the universe:

> The poet by an ulterior intellectual perception […] puts eyes, and tongue, into every dumb and inanimate object […] so the poet turns the world to glass, and shows us all things in their right series and procession. (P: 190)[158]

He continues:

> For, through that better perception, he stands one step nearer to things, and see the flowing or metamorphosis; perceives through multiform; that within the form of every creature is a force impelling it to ascend into a higher form: and, following with his eyes the life, uses the form which expresses that life and so his speech flows with nature. (P: 190)[159].

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[153] Sacvan Bercovitch, "The Myth of America." *Literaria Pragensia vol.13, no. 25,* Ed. Ondřej Pilný (Prague: Charles University, 2003), 2.
[154] F.O. Matthiessen, *American Renaissance.* (London: Oxford University Press, 1972), xii.
[155] Lundin. 100.
[156] *Essay and Poems*, ed. Tony Tanner (London: J.M. Dent, 1995); hereafter cited in the text as EaP.
[157] EaP.
[158] EaP.
[159] EaP.

His maintenance of the performative air through the preceding passages adds thrust and fervency to his words, the reader actually witnesses the unfolding of those pronouncements, as if one is listening to the very poet so described. Such proclamation invigorates Abram's description of the Romantics' ambitions:

> to represent themselves in the traditional persona of the philosopher-seer or the poet-prophet [to] set out […] to reconstitute the grounds of hope and to announce the certainty, or at least the possibility of a rebirth, in which a renewed mankind will inhabit a renovated earth where he will find himself thoroughly at home.[160]

However, on more than one account Emerson is different from his European counter-parts. The most obvious difference being found in what Abrams calls the "persona". While the German Romantics revered "the Poet" they still proposed their prophetic visions through the recondite language of philosophy and their metaphysical systems. Emerson, on the other hand, wanted to keep the human voice audible, in accordance to his the believe that "the shared human core that makes communion possible makes communication possible"[161]; in a sense anticipating the much later post-modernist tendencies, justified by Abrams usage of a line from Wallace Stevens to exemplify Emerson's prophetic style: "To speak humanly from the height or from the depth of human things, that is acutest speech."[162] Emerson insists that,

> the poet is representative. He stands among partial men for the complete man, and apprises us not of his wealth, but of the common wealth. (P: 182)[163]

Here, far from the German's superior persona of the poet-bard, Emerson appears to come closer to the intentions of William Blake, of creating a universe of the diverse perspectives. They both shared the belief and placed importance to the fact that the first condition any mythology must fulfil if it is to render life to modern life is that of cleansing doors of perception[164]: to the wonder, both frightening yet fascinating, of the universe of which they are the eyes and minds. "Be an opener of doors for such as come after thee […]"[165] Emerson wrote in his journal June 1844. Just as Blake who recognized that the inhabiting effects of myths, when they settle in their static, constant meanings, can only be destroyed by the very force of the mythologizing process, Emerson too found that myth is mythoclastic when it is functioning truly as

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[160] *Natural Supernaturalism*, 12.
[161] Richardson, 372.
[162] Wallace Stevens, as quoted in M.H. Abram's *The Natural Supernaturalism*, 69.
[163] EaP.
[164] Blake, William, "The Marriage of Heaven and Hell", plate 14.
[165] Emerson, from his journals, June 1844: *Essays and Journals*, Lewis Mumford.

myth. All the dogmatism in religion, unsound ideologies of culture and the conceited "liberalism" of the sciences can be smashed by Myth. If America was at that time the landmark for the transformation of human consciousness, on its path becoming the "modern world", it is only apropos that its mythology reflects that power of "transformation". Thus, more than having the intention of creating new myths, Emerson's interest and abhorrence to myth has developed into an interest in mythopoeic power[166]; for him "the art is in the process […t]he final product marks the end, the death, of [that] process, the point at which fossilization sets in […]"[167] or in the words of Jonathan Levin, "he [was] more interested in the way, in which we believe and doubt – in the actual flow of experience, than in system of belief or a systematically sustained scepticism"[168].

The inconsistency and incoherence that Emerson has often been charged with[169] and his own confession to "a little distrust of that completeness of system which metaphysician are apt to affect"[170] are the result of this predominant interest to make the world open to the force that,

> within the form of every creature […] impel[s] it to ascend into a higher form: and, following with his eyes the life, uses the forms which express that life, and so his speech flows with nature. (P: 190)[171]

In the words of Lewis Mumford, his mission was not to "instruct the would-be builders, nor to design a new structures" but:

> he felt impelled to examine all the "crumbling foundations, to condemn unsound structures, to clear the site of lumber, to quarry new materials.[172]

For Emerson believed that if America is to "enjoy an original relation to the universe" it first needs a cleared field of vision for that narration to come into view:

> by unlocking, at all risks, his human doors, and suffering the ethereal tides to roll and circulate through him: then [the Poet] is caught up into the life of the Universe […]. (P: 193)[173]

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[166] Richardson in *Mind on Fire* finds Emerson to most clearly express this himself in one of his later works "Poetry and Imagination", 517.
[167] Richardson, 372.
[168] Levin, Jonathan. *The Poetics in Transition*, (London: Duke University Press, 1999), 18; hereafter cited in the text as Levin.
[169] Rene Wellek, *A History of Modern Criticism vol. III,* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1970), 164; hereafter cited in the text as *A History of Modern Criticism vol. III*.
[170] Emerson as cited in Rene Wellek's *Literary Theory vol. III,* 164.
[171] EaP.
[172] Mumford, Lewis. *Emerson's Essays and Journals*, "Introduction", 29.
[173] EaP.

2.2 THE NEW HORIZONS

In "New England Reformers" Emerson said: "[…] society gains nothing whilst a man, not himself renovated attempts to renovate things around him"[174], and further expanding on this idea in "Self-Reliance":

> Progress is only apparent […] It undergoes continual changes: it is barbarous, it is civilized, it is christianized, it is rich, it is scientific; but this change is not amelioration. For everything that is given, something is taken. Society acquires new arts, and loses old instincts. […] It may be a question whether machinery does not encumber; whether we have not lost by refinement some energy, by a Christianity entrenched in establishments and forms some vigour of wild virtue.[175]

Contrary to the time's enthusiasm for America being the land of promise, the land of the future, and the land of progress and contrary to the view that Emerson was one of the leading proponents of this enthusiasm, Emerson in fact constantly repeated his scepticism towards a future aim, future goal; rather he believed that any "true advance" will not involve some remote, utopian image of a future but must manifest in the present moment:

> Virtue […] consists in a perpetual substitution of being for seeming, and with sublime propriety God is described as saying I AM.[176]

He felt that the two "promises" that constitute the very basis of America: the "promise land" and "promise of science" will without the mediating element that can relate them meaningfully to the human consciousness enslave men to their luring, yet deceitful realities, for "[man] cannot be happy and strong until he too lives with nature in the present […]" but that "at the present, man applies to nature but half his force." (N: 46)[177] In the "Prospects" of *Nature* Emerson described the loss of an active relationship to the world, where man became,

> the dwarf of himself. Once he was permeated and dissolved by spirit. He filled nature with his overflowing currents. Out from him sprang the sun and moon; from man the sun; from woman, the moon. The laws of his mind, the periods of his action externized themselves into day and night, into they year and season. But, having made for himself this huge shell, his water retired he no longer fills

[174] EaL, 596.
[175] EaP, 43.
[176] EaP, 79.
[177] EaL.

> the veins and veinlets he is shrunk to a drop. He sees, that the structure still fits him, but fits him colossally. Say, rather, once it fitted him, now it corresponds to him from far and on high. He adores timidly his own work. Now is man the follower of the sun, and woman the follower of the moon. (N: 46)[178]

Emerson felt that the new experience opened for them in the "New World" deserved or in fact demanded a "new story" where "the world shall be to us an open book, and every form significant of its hidden life and final cause." (N: 46) [179] Although for the new inhabitants America represented the expansions of new horizons for Emerson horizons no longer existed, or rather, they converged to the very ground of its individual members. In this sense it was no longer a community, not even a nation, neither civilization that could provide men with an authentic narrative. Emerson recognized that the new mythogenic zone was now the individual him/herself and the new narration must be a revelation based on that self. If in the case of the European romantics "Christianity was secularized into Romanticism" in Emerson's case, as he recorded in his journal in 1838, "what they call […] Christianity, I call […] Consciousness"[180].

His essay *Nature* was his initial attempt of rendering his ideas on the change of consciousness that America stands as witness and his proposal of the new narration, "a theory that would bring us face to face with nature and transform each individual into a representative visionary."[181] This "theory", revived from its conformed definition - a comprehensive account of reality - is reminiscent to the energizing power of myth that can, as for example Blake, Schlegel, Schelling, and later the neo-Kantians recognized, "reconcile all dualities and thus realize all possibilities"[182] and most importantly to "effectively tie man back into his milieu;"[183] in other words, to "temporize the essence."[184]

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[178] EaL.
[179] EaL.
[180] Ralph Waldo Emerson. *Emerson in His Journals*, ed. Joel Porte (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982), 190.
[181] Lundin, 65.
[182] Feldman and Richardson, 307
[183] *The Mirror*, 65.
[184] See reference no. 112.

2.3 *NATURE'*S MYTHOPOEA

In *Nature* Emerson attempted to break through both the narrow chink of conventional religion and the grounds of 19th century science "that […] operated […] of what Stanley Cavell calls 'a paltry idea of experience'"[185]. As Robert Lundin pointed out, Emerson wondered, what is the good of a theory of experience if it cannot account for the spiritual as well.[186] For he realized when he looked to science as the first step in his attempt to open doors to new experience of reality -- away from the dead, out serviced institution of the religious tradition -- that that is a truly dangerous threshold to cross, for the doctrines and rationale of the empirical sciences were actually taking doubt to *absolute* levels. Expressively described by Lundin,

> here the stakes were as high as they could be. The wounds inflicted by science were superficial and could easily be treated with the salve of idealism but if that idealism itself were to become tainted with skepticism, there might be now no way to heal the afflicted soul[187].

For Emerson the alarming workings of the empiricist theories were personified in the 18th century skeptic David Hume. Although, as Lundin discusses, in his earlier age Emerson admired Hume for his emphasis of knowledge from experience that served Emerson so well for demonstrating that "if God were to be known, it would be through sources other than those of sacrament"[188], that very theory could in fact completely destroy his ambitions for new revelation, by claiming that if we have no knowledge but from experience it consequently follows that if there is no experience of a creator we cannot know of any. Emerson wrote after reading Hume's "Essay upon Necessary Connexion" that he would like to see "the victorious answer to these calumnies upon our nature set down in impregnable propositions"[189]. His own essay *Nature* could be understood as his attempted at that answer.

To reveal the rationalists' "paltry of an experience" he took the discussion to their own ball park. Through the proposition of his new "theory" he turns the definition of theory on his head. By claiming that a "true theory is self-evident" and that that self-evidence of explaining all phenomena is its validating test, he goes

[185] Stanley Cavell, as quoted in Lundin's *From Nature to Experience*, 56.
[186] Ludin, 56.
[187] *Ibid.*, 51.
[188] Lundin, 51.
[189] R. W. Emerson, as quoted in Lundin's *From Nature to Experience*, 51.

against the time's rationalist approach, where theory is confirmed through observation, through experiment, in other words, in bias-free environment – an environment free of human experience. Thus he says, before Nietzsche or Viahinger and their proclamations of the practicality of fiction that,

> [t]here are far more excellent qualities […] than preciseness and infallibility; that a guess is often more fruitful than indisputable affirmation, and that a dream may let us deeper into the secret of nature than a hundred concerted experiments. (N: 43)[190]

Ignoring or not being able to account to these faculties of nature, is where Emerson saw the empiricist limitation and, reminiscent to Vico's ambitions in his "New Science", insisted on turning the scientific enquiry inwards – as Lundin also explains quoting Robert Langbaum, "to 'develop a corrected empiricism', which would restore the epistemological status of inner experience"[191]. What Vico described as "the first wisdom of the gentile world with metaphysics not rational and abstract but felt and imagined"[192], *Nature's* first chapter opens with just such an expression of an ecstatic experience:

> Crossing a bare common, in snow puddles, at twilight, under clouded sky, without having in my thoughts any occurrences of special good fortune, I have enjoyed a perfect exhilaration. I am glad to the brink of fear. […]Standing on the bare ground, - my head bathed by the blithe air, and uplifted to infinite space, - all mean egotism vanished. I become a transparent eye-ball; I am nothing, I see all. (N: 10)[193]

The passage illustrates what Ernst Cassirer described as the primal, initial "mythico-religious protophenomenon"[194] – "the prerequisite for all mythical thinking and mythical formulation":

> […] it is something purely instantaneous, a fleeting, emerging and vanishing mental content […]. In stark uniqueness and singleness it confronts us; not as a part of some force which may manifest itself here, there and everywhere, in various places and times […] but as something that exists only here and now, in one indivisible moment of experience, and for only one subject whom it overwhelms and holds in thrall.[195]

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[190] EaL.
[191], Roger Langbaum as quoted in Lundin's *From Nature to Experience*, 56.
[192] "New Science", 58.
[193] EaL.
[194] Cassirer, 33.
[195] *Ibid.*, 18.

> For a person whose apprehension is under the spell of this mythico-religious attitude, it is as though the whole world were simply annihilated; the immediate content, whatever it be, that commands his religious interest so completely fills his consciousness that noting else can exist beside and apart from it.[196]

If a theory is to require empirical or ecclesiastical verification to Emerson it looses all authority, for how can any authority account for an experience as described above. Thus, in move drawing on but totally modernizing his Puritan tradition, Emerson asks: "why should not we have a poetry and philosophy of insight" rather than tradition and "a religion by revelation to us, and not the history of theirs?"(N: 7)[197] Emerson goes on to explain that the key to truth, or rather authenticity, is to approach Nature as a reader does a "book"; where the poetic license of interpretation stands for that utter self-validation and authentic truth of that experience. This analogy stands for the core of his thoughts proclaimed in *Nature*, where Nature is the "book of its hidden and final cause", "symbol of the spirit", "metaphor of the human mind"; and where the new narrative is the outcome of the process of the "interpretation" – the encounter of the Spirit with Nature – "spiritually through us" (as he later reemphasized this relationship).[198]

At this point we can observe the close resemblance of Emerson's "new theory" to the definition of myth as expressed by the Romantics. As in the case of Friedrich Schlegel where neither literature nor religion could alone render his ambitions of his new synthesizing philosophy, in Emerson's *Nature* as well, art and faith cease merely being two autonomous departments, disconnected from human life by being rendered in a scheme where they both are in fact inseparable from human experience: "Art [is] a nature passed through the alembic of man" (N: 18)[199] and "Spirit […] the Supreme Being [that] does not build up nature around us, but puts it forth through us [thus] man has access to the entire mind of the Creator" (N: 41)[200]. In such a scheme the border between art and the world is hard to draw, rather it's an evolving process of the same origin; essentially, to Emerson art is synonymous with life; and thus as in the credo of the Romantics, science and all modes of knowledge

[196] *Ibid.*, 33.
[197] EaL.
[198] R.W. Emerson, "Nature", EaL, 41.
[199] EaL.
[200] EaL.

are not to focus on the preoccupation with the objective view of things and their classification, but on the primal power of subjective feeling:

> […] since, 'every object rightly seen, unlocks a new faculty of the soul'. That which was unconscious truth, becomes, when interpreted and defined in an object, a part of the domain of knowledge, - a new weapon in the magazine of power. (N: 25)[201]

Through his analogy where life is a book and every individual its equally "qualified" reader he indeed humanizes the concept of the "Christian revelation"; in a way similar to Herder who considered the Bible as passionate, fresh, Oriental poetry[202], Emerson now turned "revelation" into the process whereby through reading and interpretation, just as when enjoying a work of art, humans engage in the pleasures and meanings of life. Emerson dedicated another essay entirely to this subject of art equaling life, going as far as to proclaim that once art is detached from nature "it is poor and low"[203] but that,

> [a] true announcement of the law of creation, if a man were found worthy to *declare* [my emphasis] it, would carry art up into the kingdom of nature, and destroy its separate and contrasted existence[204].

If myth's essential function is to relate the human being to his environment, "to most effectively tie man back to his milieu"[205] then Emerson's proposed theory of *Nature* represents that mythologizing act, where that "huge shell" of an alienated universe, fits man right again, condensing from its heights of distant heavens, to the very region of the individual self. Consequently, "in such a scheme there is hardly any place for criticism", as René Wellek points out:

> [c]riticism can only be empathy and identification. Emerson quotes the old saw that 'every scripture is to be interpreted by the same spirit which gave it forth' as the 'fundamental law of criticism,' and he boldly asserts that 'the reader of Shakespeare is also a Shakespeare.' This means 'the ultimate identity of the artist and the spectator'[206].

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[201] EaL.
[202] Packer, Barbara. "Origin and Authority: Emerson and the Higher Criticism", *Reconstucting American Literary History*, edit. Sacvan Bercovitch (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986). 73-74; hereafter cited in the text as Packer.
[203] Emerson, "Art", EaL, 176.
[204] R.W. Emerson, "Art", EaP, 176.
[205] *The Mirror,* 65.
[206] *Literary Theory vol. III*, 173.

Or also the reader and creator, hence achieving the self-validating authority of the act in "becoming". In consequence the other effect Wellek admits to Emerson's scheme is the "qualitative" and "inner" value of experience it achieves to produce - foreshadowing what Lévi-Strauss saw as the main contribution of myth to modern science:

> that this trend can lead us to believe that between life and thought, there is not the absolute gab which was accepted as a matter of fact by the 17th century philosophical dualism. […T]hen perhaps we will reach more wisdom, let us say, than we think we are capable of.[207]

This connection between Emerson's proposed "new theory" and modern science's focus on the "qualitative" aspect of experience will be returned to and confronted in more detail in the final chapter of this study.

Bringing the idea of possibility into the realm of the present moment, is as Kenneth Burk, or Paul Riceour, Ernst Cassirer and Roland Barthes agree another function of the mythologizing activity. *Nature* achieves this effect; for what is proposed through the message *Nature* in its form represents. Indeed, the work itself is an example of the myth-forming process. What is described through the example of the Sphinx – "the necessity of Spirit to manifest itself in material form" (N: 25)[208] – or in other words, "the creative act by which a poet, emulating Divinity, brings possibility over into the realm of being"[209] Emerson attempts to realize by "taking a crack at the Sphinx riddle", through the means of the composition itself. Thus the effect of *Nature* (as with all Emerson's essays) is two fold. In its explicit message it presents the proposal of a "theory" or rather a mode of knowledge which in its message suggests a scheme of a totalizing comprehension exceeding the individual dogmas of religions or theories of science and simultaneously by the scope and rendering of that explication - through his art - he emulates the creative mystery of the force itself. Thus, attaining what he declares at the beginning of his essay that,

> [t]he production of a work of art throws a light upon the mystery of humanity. A work of art is an abstract or epitome of the world. It is the result or expression of nature, in miniature. (N: 18)[210]

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[207] Lévi-Strauss, 19.
[208] EaL.
[209] Bodmer and Bretinger, as quoted in Abrams' *The Mirror and the Lamp,* 288.
[210] EaL.

In this sense what Schlegel and Schelling philosophized as being art's essential mythical function -"the mediatress and reconciler of nature and man"[211] Emerson *literally* presents, for his philosophy turned "being" through the facility of the creative expression. This is where Emerson exceeds the Germans' by extending their revival of myth in the form of a *philosophy* towards modernity's emphasis of myth's *utility in the real* (q.v. 3.3 and 4). This also helps to explain Emerson depiction of *Nature* through "commodities". We are told that,

> […] it is certain that the power to produce this delight, does not reside in nature, but in man, or the harmony of both […] Nature , in its ministry to man, is not only the material, but is also the processs, and the result. All the parts incessantly work into each others hands for the profit of man.

This idea of Nature's own essence giving us instrumentality for dealing with our human condition (an idea he then later expanded upon in "Method of Nature" q.v. 3.3). This expresses the germination of the crucial principle common to all of Emerson's works, that which Robert Richardson showed he admired for example about the Quaker founder George Fox - for "being an idealist searching to 'accommodate the shows of things to the mind' and realist, 'always substituting a thing for a hollow form'."[212] Combining the idealist with the realist, illuminates the connection between the spiritual and the natural, that spiritual is never a realm apart from the natural but is instead revealed -- and alone revealed -- through the natural, meaning through the "human being", the "I" by means of creativity. Thus for Emerson it did not satisfy to merely *expresses* the ideal of myth he also attempted at its *formation* in the real, to achieve the harmonious reconciliation of the ideal and the real in the cosmos of art - he explains this himself, using Shakespeare's art as an example:

> Shakespeare possesses the power of subordinating nature for the purposes of expression, beyond all poets. His imperial muse tosses the creation like a bauble from hand to hand, and uses it to embody any caprice of thought that is upper-most in his mind. The remotest spaces of nature are visited, and the farthest sundered things are brought together, by a subtle spiritual connection. (N: 35)[213]

This is the fundamental background on whose surface Emerson would further formulate his theory of symbolic expression - the idea which Emerson illustrated

[211] *The Mirror*, 50.
[212] R.W. Emerson as quoted in Richardson's *Mind on Fire,* 163.
[213] EaL

himself through his exaltation of Shakespeare for reaching the highest form of artistry, proclaiming that: "Shakespeare worked the miracle of mythologizing every fact of the common life"[214].

The totalizing effect and harmonious unity, indeed a modern take at a new myth that Emerson presented through *Nature* cannot however be taken as the ultimate conclusion of a thinker who in one of his later works said:

> Why pretend that life is so simple a game, when we know how subtle and elusive the Proteus is? […] Why fancy that you have all the truth in your keeping? There is much to say on all sides.[215]

In fact, Emerson's mythologizing exceeds on a much greater scheme then a single narrative.

Already in *Nature* Emerson leaves signs that it is the mythogenic tendencies rather than its products that need to be focal concern of the modern mind: "It is essential" he says,

> to a true theory of nature and of man, that it should contain somewhat progressive: Uses that are exhausted or that may be, and facts that end in the statement, cannot be all that is true of this brave lodging wherein man is harbored, and wherein all his faculties find appropriate and endless exercise. And all the uses of nature admit of being summed in one, which yields the activity of man an infinite scope. Through all its kingdoms, to the suburbs and outskirts of things, it is faithful to that cause whence it had its origin. It always speak of Spirit. It suggests the absolute. It is a perpetual effect. (N: 40)[216]

Emerson to be "faithful to that cause" was impelled similarly to Coleridge by including the mystification text in the "Biographia Literaria", to "mobilize the whole by the very act of variedly breaking it".[217]

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[214] R.W. Emerson as quoted in Wellek's *Literary Theory vol.II,,* 175.
[215] R.W. Emerson, "Montaigne; or, The Skeptic," EaL, 694; an example used also by Levin in *The Poetics of Transition* to discuss Emerson's style characteristic of contradictions and multiplicity of perspectives.
[216] EaL.
[217] Blanchot as quoted in Hrbata's and Procházka's *Romantismus a romantismy*, 189.

2.4 "EXPERIENCE'S" MYTHOCLASM

Remembering what power Blake assigned to man's perception: "the Eye altering alters all" Emerson essentially is fascinated, although not always comfortable, with this dictatorial power of human perception. Perhaps when he asked towards the end of *Nature*, "Who can set bounds to the possibilities of Man?" (N: 41)[218] it wasn't a rhetorical question but proposing a serious enquiry. Emerson understood that just as a man's mind is capable of creating a harmonious universe it can in one breath destroy it. Man might be God but, as the Orphic poet sang to him, a "God in ruins" (N: 45)[219].

Those thorny thoughts that stand in stark opposition to the smooth veneer of *Nature* accumulated eight years later in the solemn work of "Experience".
"Experience", however, cannot be looked at simply as a work set out to deny all the proclamations as narrated by *Nature*; the relationship is rather much more intricately entwined, where the works interpenetrate and in fact "Experience" takes its departure from within the other.

At a closer observance the concepts in "Experience" that appear to contrast to those of *Nature*, are in fact found to be of the very same "nature"- it is the choice of *perspective* that is the difference. What in *Nature* was developed as "self-validating theory" to bring man in wholesome contact with his environment, in "Experience" -- by what appears as an act of appropriation of Shakespeare's inspiration -- "the remotest places of nature are visited." (N: 35)[220] This exploration into the very edge of meaning results in the discovery that the initial function of the theory of *Nature* to harmonize the world is found solely locked within the isolated circumference of utter aloneness. The very "reader" of *Nature* is in "Experience" the solitary individual, incapable of any *communication* with the outside world. In other words "Experience" reveals that what has been embodied in the form of *Nature* is in fact merely the subjective excitement objectified. In austere contrast to *Nature*'s ecstatic experience where "all mean egotism vanishes" (N:10) [221] in "Experience" not even the most authentic, private and deepest of experiences, like loosing a loved one, can break

[218] EaL.
[219] EaL.
[220] EaL.
[221] EaL.

these bounds of subjectivity, "teach [us] nothing, nor carry [us] one step into real nature"[222] (E: 204). What in *Nature* is portrayed as the "transparent eye-ball" in "Experience" is the despotic "lord of life" that only provides the self with incomplete pictures of reality. In "Experience" there seems to be no possibility of uniting the "many-colored lenses" into one harmonious whole. The reality of *Nature* with its "unison" of plot figured through the metaphor of the act of reading a book is in "Experience" shown to be totally derisory. In fact, "Experience" does not build on any of such mythic realities of wholeness and unity, but solely presents "a solitary performance":

> […]subject and an object, it takes so much to make the galvanic circuit complete, but magnitude adds nothing. What imports it whether it is Kepler and the sphere; Columbus and America; a reader and his book; or puss with her tail? (E: 220) [223]

According to Richard Poirier, the only lesson left by "Experience" is the necessity to

> submit to the poverty of subjectivity, the poverty of self […]. It is only in this poverty […] that you find 'the God'. [Emerson] does not say God but 'the God', referring thereby to some generative, creative power that in fact only temporarily allows expression of itself though the medium of human being[224].

Here Poirier consents, as Lundin shows, with Jonathan Levin's, commentary on "Experience" who said that "myth or metaphor maybe inadequate"[225], because along with Poirier assertion "whatever figure of order we construct we are aware it is only manmade and temporary"[226]; yet despite this and more importantly, as Levin goes on to emphasize in his discussion focused on the multiple-perspective quality of Emerson's work in his *The Poetics of Transition*, "the mythologizing and metaphor generating imagination remains an essential component […]."[227] In the essay version of "Nature" that follows "Experience" in the *Second Series*, Emerson expresses direct summation of this dual stipulation of the human consciousness:

> Man carries the world in his head – the whole astronomy and chemistry in a thought. Because the history of nature is characterized in his brain, therefore is he the prophet and discoverer of her secrets […].[228]

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[222] EaP.
[223] EaP.
[224] Richard Poirier, *Poetry and Pragmatism*, as quoted in Lundin's *From Nature to Experience*, 61-62.
[225] Levin,13.
[226] Richard Poirier, *Poetry and Pragmatism*, as quoted in Lundin, 62.
[227] Levin, 13.
[228] R.W. Emerson, "Nature," EaP, 260.

If *Nature* represented the prophetic and myth forming necessity of the human condition then "Experience" stands for the demystifying tendency where perception like the "sad, sharp-eyed man, who sees how paltry a game is played, […] refuses to play, but blabs the secret"[229] of the very prophesy we forget was our creation in the first place.

Many criticism on Emerson's work, point out the contradictions found between individual essays, but find "Experience" to be the one that achieves success in surpassing those contradictions, a good example stands Mark Bauerlein's commentary who said that:

> in "Experience", Emerson shows how only a lightsome elasticity of thinking can save minds from the 'chain of physical necessity' and the imbecility of unconscious imitation" and henceforth shows us how to 'live among surfaces, the true art [being] to skate well on them'[230].

This assertion, however, that "Experience" is the celebration of ceaseless change and of the tendency that later would embody the "most distinctive and difficult aspect of the pragmatic legacy: the mind's power being indistinguishable from its abiding powerlessness"[231], is misleadingly attributed to "Experience" alone. After all, the voice of "Experience" admits: "I am a fragment and this is a fragment of me." (E: 221)[232] On contrary, it is the entire complex body of Emerson's essays that speaks for this embedded tendency, for as Stephan Whicher pointed out,

> [w]e are dealing with a mind that makes any assertion of belief against the felt pull of its lurking opposite, the two forming together a total truth of experience than the opposing truths of statement of it is composed[233].

Hence, although amelioration of change and transition are significant part of Emerson's essays, coherence, unity and wholeness remain important; not only because "these qualities […] always been and still remain psychologically and dramatically compelling"[234] but because it completes the subject matter of his prime interest: to seek liberation both from the manacles of sensual subjectivism and myth's canonization:

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[229] *Ibid.*, 268.
[230] Mark Bauerlein's quotation from his *Pragmatic Mind* as quoted in Lundin's *From Nature to Experience*, 66.
[231] Levin, 198.
[232] EaP.
[233] Stephan Whicher as quoted in Jonathan Levin's *The Poetics of Transition*, 17.
[234] Levin, 6-7.

I unsettle all things. No facts are to me sacred, none are profane; I simply experiment; an endless seeker, with no Past at my back.

Yet this incessant movement and progression which all things partake, could never become sensible to us, but by contrast to some principle of fixture or stability […]. Whilst the eternal generation of circles proceeds, the eternal generator abides. (C: 154)[235]

[235] EaP.

CHAPTER 3: LANGUAGE IN THE MIDST

If "Experience" were the sole essay Emerson had written, then certainly readings similar to Bauerlein's and those of the Pragmatists would be impossible. It is because of it's "transitional dynamic"[236] - it's clastic faculty to disarm what has been pre-constructed and then concentrate the fragments to form a new composition that such reading comes into being; a by-product of Emerson's lifetime fascination, with the mysterious force that rushes thoughts to form and solidify only to become fervent and then be crushed back to thought again. There is no better description of it then Emerson's own:

> The life of man is a self-evolving circle, which, from a ring imperceptibly small, rushes on all sides outwards to new and larger circles, and that without end. That extent to which this generation of circles, wheel without wheel, will go, depends on the force of truth of the individual soul. For it is the inert effort of each thought, having formed itself into a circular way of circumstance, - as, for instance, an empire, rules of an art, a local usage, a religious rite, - to heap itself on that ridge, and to solidify, and hem in the life. But if the soul is quick and strong, it bursts over that boundary on all sides, and expands another orbit on the great deep, which also runs up into a high wave, with attempt to again to stop and bind. (C: 147)[237]

It is the oscillation between the push and pull of this twin-principle that creates the most unique trait of the Emersonian essay; a self-generative scheme, powered by the incessant dialogue between thought and form,

> [where] the length of the discourse indicate[s] the distance betwixt the speaker and the hearer. If they were at a perfect understanding in any part, no words would be suffered. (C: 151)[238]

Emerson's imaging of generating circles to describe this principle strikes a remarkable resemblance to Wilhelm von Humboldt's contemplation on the problem of language:

> Man lives with his objects chiefly-in fact, since his feeling and acting depends on his perception, one may say exclusively - as language presents them to him. By the same process whereby he spins language out of his own being, he ensnares

[236] A term used first by Jonathan Levin in *Poetics of Transition* when describing what the Pragmatics adopted from Emerson's philosophy, 7.
[237] EaP.
[238] EaP.

himself in it; and each language draws a magic circle around the people to which it belongs, a circle from which there is no escape save by stepping out of it into another.[239]

From this angle, the relation between language and myth comes into full view. The following sections will focus on examining Emerson's use of language and its interrelatedness to the mythopoeic faculty to reveal what significant role it has for creating the effect of his compositions' transitional dynamics and its import for the development of his distinctive theory of expression.

3.1 CIRCLES

"The circle is Emerson's figure of figures,"[240] explains Jonathan Levin: it is a figure that has "dual connotations, […] it is both a limit and a dynamic force."[241] In agreement with Levin, the circle is Emerson's figure of choice for representing his notion of symbolic language in general. The "dual connotation" that Levin points-out is the key to understanding the function of Emerson's use of symbols and simultaneously the technique by which his writings implications extend over the textual level.

Indeed, symbols and metaphors for Emerson stand for that twin-principle as exemplified by the two essays discussed in the previous chapter; for on one hand, symbolic language can stand for the manifestation of what Ernst Cassirer described as "the curse of mediacy"[242], and on the other, the products of the spontaneous force of generation, an original way and tendency of expression. The kind of skepticism described in "Experience" toward any outward manifestation of principles, truths, and judgments passed on the world, condenses for Emerson on Cassirer's delineation of the language problem, Emerson says: "As I am, so I see; use what language we will, we can never say anything but what we are." (E: 219)[243] Emerson educes the modern thoughts of his day, where the linguistic theories and language criticism settled to regard the alleged truth of language for complete dissolution and accept that this

[239] Humboldt, von Wilhelm, as quoted in Cassirer's *Myth and Language*, 9.
[240] Levin, 40.
[241] Levin, 40.
[242] Cassirer, 8.
[243] EaP.

"truth" is nothing but a sort of "phantasmagoria of the spirit"[244]. In a manner reminiscent to Max Müller's diction Emerson continues:

> Perhaps these subject-lenses have a creative power […].Once we lived in what we saw; now, the rapaciousness of this new power, which threatens to absorb all things, engages us. Nature, art, persons, letters, religions, objects, successively tumble in, and God is but one of its ideas. Nature and literature are subjective phenomena; every evil and every good thing is a shadow which we cast. (E: 217)[245]

However, unlike Müller's argument that hence poetic language or mythic narratives are *merely* the "dark shadow which language throws upon thought,"[246] where symbols' denotation is ascribed to a mere suggestion, a mental defect,

> which in face of the concrete variegation and totality of actual experience, must always appear a poor and empty shell,[247]

Emerson's skepticism reaches a different conclusion; for it is in the contrast between the varied coloration of nature -- the many-colored lenses of experience -- and the "unbound substance", the infinite string on which the beads of colors are strung and which changes not, that reveals to him the hope that through the means of symbolic expression -- the process by which the two will be attuned to one another -- human beings can access authentic reality:

> That which proceeds in succession might be remembered, but that which is co-existent, or ejaculated from a deeper cause, as yet far from being conscious, know not its own tendency. So is it with us, now skeptical, or without unity, because immersed in forms and effects all seeming to be of equal yet hostile value […]. Bear with these distractions, with this coetaneous growth of the parts: they will one day be members, and obey one will. On that one will, on that secret cause, they nail our attention and hope. Life is hereby melted into an expectation or a religion. Underneath the inharmonious and trivial particulars, is a musical profession, the Ideal journeying always with us, - the heaven without rent or seam. Do but observe the mode of our illumination. When I converse with a profound mind, or if at any time, being alone, I have good thoughts, I do not at one arrive at satisfaction, as when, being thirsty, I drink water, or go to the fire, being cold: no! but I am at first apprised of my vicinity to a new and excellent region of life. By persisting to read

[244] Cassirer, 7.
[245] EaP.
[246] See reference no. 14.
[247] Cassirer, 7.

> or to think, this region gives further sign of itself, as it were in flash of light, in sudden discoveries of its profound beauty and repose […]. (E: 215)[248]

In a similar method applied in *Nature*, Emerson in "Experience" uses the empiricist theory only to topple it over on the grounds of its own principles. It is from this angle one may start perceiving the interrelatedness of *Nature* to "Experience", where the seeming contradictions, in fact are annexed by the very process of the "double connotation". "Experience" emulates the skeptic's world-view but, as it does so, that very world-view is driven to eat itself up, for the presented scheme of rational and objective empiricism in clash with the subjective perspective drives those very empiricist's principles of classification, organization, and summarization of the "real" world to nothing but the same "illusionary" fragments of the mind -- as in the drama of the kitten who is in fact chasing nothing other but its own tail. Paradoxically then, it appears that the empiricists' theories, like those presented by Müller, turn out more *idealist* rather than realist for their assumption that there is some nature of things outside the mediating reality of language. For Emerson, on the other hand, the question as to what those "ideals" may be and what is their independent meaning "Experience" makes irrelevant. "Experience" instead proposes the question: "why not realize your world?" (E: 222)[249] There invoking the words of *Nature's* "Idealism" that said:

> Whether nature enjoys a substantial existence without or is only in the apocalypse of the mind, it is alike useful and alike venerable to me. Be it what it may, it is ideal to me, so long as I cannot try the accuracy of my senses. (N: 32)[250]

And it is the empiricists who ridicule themselves by claiming to by-pass the senses by applying their "objective" experiments and tests, yet in the end always only "taking their own tests of success." (E: 222)[251] Contrary to his time's "realists", Emerson, does not assume any "givens", which man is to outwardly identify, for all those "givens" are essentially gifts from himself - as was discussed in the previous chapter, its own prophecy. At this point we find that "Experience's" conclusion "to set-up the strong present tense" (E: 212)[252] correlates with his revamped version of "Nature" included in the *Second Series*, that said:

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[248] EaP.
[249] EaP.
[250] EaL.
[251] EaP.
[252] *Ibid.*

> […] if, instead of identifying ourselves with the work, we feel that the soul of the workman streams through us, we shall find the peace of the morning dwelling first in out hearts, and the fathomless powers of gravity and chemistry, and over them, of life, pre-existing within us in their highest form. (C: 148)[253]

It is in the seeming contradiction of *Nature* and "Experience", neither of whose individual final meanings are in fact "final" for both is invaded by the other, that exposes the shaping of the dynamic nature of Emerson's theory of expression -- as he put forward in his essay "Circles" -- where nothing is ever "contradicted by the new [but] is only limited by the new" (C: 148)[254] in order to be transcended. Hence, even the particular Cratylism presented in *Nature* is rather ostensible and cannot be taken as entirely forthright in expressing Emerson's complete thoughts on language, which are not revealed in full until his *Second Series*. However, in "Circles" he already provides more clues on the direction his theory of expression set to course.

In "Circles" he does restate that nature is the revelation of God's word:

> These manifold tenacious qualities, this chemistry and vegetation, these metals and animals, which seem to stand there for their own sake, are means and methods only, are words of God, and as fugitive as other words. (C: 152)[255]

What is stressed here is that Nature does not imply fixity - for nature is a "method", where Emerson implies its narrative, evolving structure:

> [e]very ultimate fact is the first of a new series; every general law only a particular fact of some more general law presently to disclose itself[256].

Most importantly, it emphasizes the role of agency of the "human power" (C: 146)[257], for it is man who "finishes the story" (C: 147)[258] and so the "double-connotation" of comprehensiveness and limitation rest in this human faculty of creativity. Humans are this universal power's primary *organ* through which it ceaselessly rewrites reality and enables the Universe to look at itself in each new episode:

> In common hours society sits cold and statuesque. We all stand waiting, empty, - knowing, possibly, that we can be full, surrounded by mighty symbols which are not symbols to us, but prose and trivial toys. Then cometh the god, and converts the statues into fiery men and by flash of his eye burns up the veil which shrouded all

[253] Emerson, "Nature", EaP, 272.
[254] EaP.
[255] EaP.
[256] *Ibid*
[257] *Ibid.*
[258] *Ibid.*

> things and the meaning of the very furniture, of cup and saucer, of chair and clock and tester, is manifest. The facts which loomed so large in the fogs yesterday, - property, climate, breeding, personal beauty, and the like, have strangely changed their proportions. All that we reckoned settled shakes now and rattles and literature, cities, climates, religions, leave their foundations, and dance before our eyes. (C: 151)[259]

Thus, the notion of Cratylism, where nature is the inspirer of language, is imparted and developed by the introduction of the mediation of human perception, often for Emerson signified by the pun of the metonymic and synecdochic use of the "I/eye":

> The eye is the first circle; the horizon which it forms is the second; and throughout nature this primary figure is repeated without end. It is the highest emblem in the cipher of the world. (C: 146)[260]

This mediator is what Emerson comes to consider the most vital in understanding man's position in the universe, for it is the force that mediates both the language of nature (i.e. evolution) and is the same force that acts on every individual's self-expression, leading him to espouse the principle that becomes now the dominant feature of his works, that: "*so to be* is the sole inlet of *so to know.*" (C: 155)[261] Thus, in such a scheme symbols and metaphors no longer simply present a mere "suggestions" or allegories of a natural "facts" but are the forces that mediate and produce the world as beheld by human consciousness -- an agent which is at once the "transcendent unifier"[262] yet present and active only through the particularities of individual experience of the here and now. For as he says later in "The Poet":

> […] we are not pans and borrow, nor even porters of the fire and torch-bearers, but children of the fire, made of it, and only the same divinity transmuted. (P: 182)[263]

"The Poet" is perhaps his most revealing work on his theory of symbolism, where he directly confronts what he implied in passing in his first series of essays - his faith in the unswerving relationship between external world and man's inner experience, and where human capability of symbolic expression stands for the expression of the Universe itself: "[…] for all men have the thoughts of which the

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[259] *Ibid.*
[260] EaP.
[261] *Ibid.*
[262] A term used by Kenneth Burke in his "I, Eye, Ay – Concerning Emerson's Early Essay "Nature" and the Machinary of Transcendence," *Language as Symbolic Action* (Berkley: University of California Press, 1968), 191.
[263] EaP.

universe is the celebration." (P: 187) [264] Not coincidently, this essay, composed simultaneously with "Experience", reformulates Emerson's growing interest in the "revelationary" importance of the individual experience. "The Poet" reaffirms the correspondence of art with life, where literary symbols don't allude to concepts or things outside the work of art, but are the organs for the spirit, or energy of the creator – where the work created being the Universe itself, or as he formulates it: "Art is the path of the creator to his work." (P: 119)[265]

He begins the essay in similar tone of his previous works, like *Nature* and "Art", where he complains of man's detachment from Nature and expresses his belief that through art and creative expression that detachment may be repaired:

> There is no man who does not anticipate a supersensual utility in the sun, and stars, earth, and water. These stand and wait to render him a peculiar service. But there is some obstruction, or some excess of phlegm in our constitution, which does not suffer them to yield the due effect. The impression of nature fall on us too feebly to make us artists. (P: 182)[266]

He accounts this problem to the misunderstanding of the relationship between spirit and form, that his contemporaries have "lost the perception of the instant dependence of form upon soul" (P: 182)[267] and that this results in the conflict in his present society where spirituality and naturalism are adversaries. In "The Poet" Emerson places his faith in the power of reconciliation possessed by human *awareness,* an awareness that stands for Emerson as the ultimate purpose of Man and each man where under passion or enthusiasm spirituality and nature are brought together. It particularly emphasizes the role of the Poet, who is the *interpreter* -- "the sayer and namer" (P: 183)[268] -- not the creator, by *reporting* on his enliven senses by experiencing the world under rapture. Here it is just a step away from the understanding how nature, the nature of human experience, thus must be interpreted as the symbol of the human consciousness. But that is not the ultimate symbol; the ultimate symbol in Emerson's conception, is the primary circle, as he described in his first line in "Circles", of the human being to that universal Power; the creative force,

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[264] *Ibid.*
[265] *Ibid.*
[266] EaP.
[267] *Ibid.*
[268] *Ibid.*

undefined spirit, the Will, the mystery, the God that realizes itself through us, which makes man "[…] only half himself, the other half is his expression." (P:182)[269]

Moreover, "The Poet" further expands on what was already implied in "Circles": the formulation of the important distinction between the inert, dead words, and the life-infusing, universe-revealing, symbol-creating process. For when symbols, are past the process of creating a new concept, and like in the case of the rings of each circle are only pending in their limitations, they naturally create their walls and boundaries, consequently, "every thought is a prison; every heaven is also a prison." (P: 196)[270] However, the important point being, that human consciousness -- the symbol being aware of its self -- "the child of the fire", delights in the breaking of those boundaries because:

> the metamorphosis excites in the beholder an emotion of joy. The use of symbols has a certain power of emancipation and exhilaration for all men. […] We are like persons who come out of a cave or cellar into the open air. (P: 194)[271]

It is in this liberation that Emerson finds the essence of being human and is the source of his optimism and faith that Man and society may be invigorated again; for as Levin described the "transitionl dynamic": "at all times, circles enclose us, but their limits provide the basis for their own overcoming"[272] and the human "I" serves both as the witness and carrier for the mythopoeic power capable of breaking through and transform "the barbarism and materialism of the times" into a new poem. (P: 198)[273]

On this plane Emerson's world-view starts to unite consciousness with sacredness. Where "the inwardness, and mystery, of this attachment" (P: 188)[274] - of human being's participation in the unfolding of the world through symbolic expression – implies a *natural* communion:

> the ideal shall be real to [the Poet], and the impressions of the actual world shall fall like summer rain, copious, but not troublesome, to [his] invulnerable essence.

Ernst Cassirer's interpretation of symbols, that remarkably parallel's Emerson's conception, serves well as explication of this communion,

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[269] *Ibid.*
[270] EaP.
[271] *Ibid.*
[272] Levin, 40.
[273] *Ibid.*
[274] *Ibid.*

> Man lives with forms and objects only in so far as he lives with these symbols; he reveals reality to himself, and himself to reality, in that he lets himself and the environment enter into this plastic medium […][275].

In this realm nature and man do not merely make contact, but blend with one another, and constitutes Emerson's conception of the Divine:

> [h]ere we find ourselves, suddenly, not in the pleasant walks of critical speculation, but in a holy place, and should go very warily and reverently. We stand before the secret of the world, there where Being passes into Appearance and Unity into Variety. (P: 187)[276]

Hence it is profligate to try and understand the gab between nature and man, but instead Emerson reaffirms what he already implied in "Experience" to "set up the strong present tense."(E: 212)[277] In other words fully participate in the sacred circles' unfolding. To Emerson, the only way the Poet may achieve this is "to speak" the immediate experience and realize "the transformation of genius into practical power," (E: 222)[278] for what Emerson regards to be the most important is that each man's individual uniqueness is in fact a necessary faculty in the workings of the world.

It is through this paradox embedded for Emerson in symbolic expression -- providing both mediating but simultaneously liberating experience -- that Emerson believed can serve man to achieve the "original relation to the universe". Using a well phrased depiction of this from Levin's work, the concept of "Circles" is Emerson's "testimony to the dynamic energies that outrun our best ideals, values, aspiration, or actions"[279] in order to sustain man's need and obligation of being Universe's eye and voice of its perpetual self-overcoming. On these grounds skepticism and faith converge, for "neither rests in their meaning but [serve] as the exponent" (P: 196)[280] of the other - as *Nature* and "Experience" do.

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[275] Cassirer, 10.
[276] EaP.
[277] EaP.
[278] EaP.
[279] Levin, 40.
[280] EaP.

3.2. MYTH AS OPERATIONAL LANGUAGE

In the 1957, Ronald Barthes concludes his work *Mythologies* with the following lines:

> It seems that this is a difficulty pertaining to our times: there is as yet only one possible choice, and this choice can bear only on two equally extreme methods: either to posit a reality which is entirely permeable to history and ideaologize or, conversely, to posit a reality which is ultimately impenetrable, irreducible, and , in this case, poetize. In a word, I do not yet see a synthesis between ideology and poetry […].
>
> The fact that we cannot manage to achieve more than an unstable grasp of reality doubtless gives the measure of our present alienation: we constantly drift between the object and its demystification, powerless to render its wholeness. For if we penetrate the object, we liberate it but we destroy it; and if we acknowledge its full weight, we respect it, but we restore it to a state which is still mystified. It would seem that we are condemned for some time yet always to speak excessively about reality. This is probably because ideologism and its opposite are types of behaviour which are still magical, terrorized, blinded and fascinated by the split in the social world. And yet, this is what we must seek: A reconciliation between reality and men, between description and explanation, between object and knowledge.[281]

Emerson has threaded this ground long before the post-modernist and deconstructionist speculations. His own search for what Barthes has called for over a century later lead him to conceptualize a scheme of direct "dependence of form upon soul" (P: 181)[282], that anticipated the modern theorists' emphasis on the qualitative aspect of reality, as opposed to the merely quantitative and discursive emphasis imposed by science.

In fact Emerson's centripetal cosmology rendered through his body of essays stands in revolt to the discursive, rational conceptions. It represents what Ernst Cassirer defined in *Language and Myth* as the "mythmaking consciousness"; a conception of the world where the separate elements of the rational consciousness "are not thus separately given, but have to be originally and gradually derived from

[281] Barthes, 159.
[282] EaP.

the whole; the […] culling and sorting out individual forms" is still in process[283]. For this reason the mythic state of mind has been called "complex" state, coined by the ethnologist Karl Theodor Preuss, to distinguish if from the abstract analytic attitude[284]. This state of mind is characterized by intensive compression, where all forces are imported to focus on a single point[285] and Emerson's essays as individual spheres possess this same characteristic. His essay does not compare itself to another; the pieces do not intentionally combine or follow in definite order in an all-inclusive context, in a closed system. Rather each work is captivated and rapt by its own specific atmosphere. Remembering Cassirer's definition of mythical thinking, Emerson's essay also "comes to rest in the immediate experience; […] [where its presence becomes] so great that everything else dwindles before it."[286] The very important result, of this mythical conception is, however, as Cassirer points out, the tension between the subject and the object:

> [w]hen external reality is not merely viewed and contemplated, but overcomes a man in sheer immediacy, with emotions of fear or hope, terror or wish fulfillment: then the spark jumps somehow across, the tension finds release, as the subjective excitement becomes objectified, and confronts the mind as a god or daemon[287]. […] the inner excitement which was a mere subjective state has vanished, and has been resolved into the objective form of myth or of speech.[288]

Although Cassirer speaks there of the mytho-religious experience that gives rise to myth and language, it does reflect and explain Emerson's own dynamic style of expression. It is for this reason that his scheme enables *Nature* and "Experience" to occupy psychological space in equal degrees, for they both are particular objectified forms of thus excited human consciousness. What Cassirer considered as the operation behind myth and word formation, that which Emerson described in "Circles" as the mysterious force that unsettles and shakes all "trivial toys" of mundane reality to be appropriated to the enlivened vision of the inflamed consciousness[289], his essays demonstrate, for each presents a miniature of this myth-, word-making activity. It explains why often his essays are questioned for being

[283] Cassirer, 13.
[284] *Ibid.*
[285] *Ibid.*, 30.
[286] *Ibid.*, 32.
[287] Cassirer, 33.
[288] Cassirer, 36.
[289] See reference no. 214.

paradoxical or contradictory, and why their titles seem to never correspond to their content, for they represent the activity of a fervent consciousness seizing a certain concept or formulation only to transform it to a new meaning, creating new formulation - in fact not creating it, but revealing it, for as Emerson expressed in "The Poet" that meaning was there already imported by the universal Force, but waiting for human imagination to conceive it into form. It is in this process that Emerson envisioned society's redeeming or reconciling aid to gaining a meaningful, "authentic" relationship with the Universe. Roland Barthes, contrastively, in his essay *Myth Today* considered this operation as scrounging and immobilizing, where myth works its power to give a historical concept a natural facade:

> Myth is constituted by the loss of the historical quality of things: in it, things lose the memory that they once were made. The world enters language as a dialectical relation between activities, between human actions; it comes out of myth as a harmonious display of essences. A conjuring trick has taken place; it has turned reality inside out, it has emptied it of history and has filled it with nature, it has removed from things their human meaning so as to make them signify a human insignificance. [290]

It is exactly this that Emerson fervently described throughout his "Circles" and embodied in his work *Nature* (q.v. Ch. 1). He further describes this process of the filling of human activity with nature by the particularly expressive, extended metaphor of "fossil poetry":

> As the limestone of the continents of infinite masses of the shells of animalcules, so language I made up of images, or tropes, which now, in their secondary use, have long ceased to remind us of their poetic origin. (P: 190)[291]

However, contrary to Barthes, Emerson's depiction of this problem ceases to be understood as an artificial activity, "a conjuring trick"; rather it is a necessary process, part of universe's self-sustaining and evolving activity. Most importantly, however, Barthes depiction of the mythologizing act is of a parasitic element that appends itself to a pre-established reality. However, as Cassirer points out, this conception of myth is still derived from the very analytical way of thought that in fact mythical consciousness is in opposition to, for the mythical consciousness "does not super-add [some mere products of fancy] to certain definite elements of empirical,

[290] Barthes, 142-143.
[291] EaP.

"realistic" existence[292]; instead, the new formulation is steeped in the imagery of the primary experience of the vision "and saturated with its atmosphere"[293]. It is this mode of expression that enabled Emerson to demonstrate both in content and style that "language never denotes simply things as such, but always conceptions arising from the autonomous activity of the mind. The nature of concepts therefore depends on the way this active viewing is directed"[294]:

> The termination of the world in a man, appears to be the last victory of intelligence. The universal does not attract us until housed in an individual. Who heeds the waste abyss of possibility? The ocean is everywhere the same, but it has not character until seen with the shore or the ship. Who would value any number of miles of Atlantic brine bounded by lines of latitude and longitude? Confine it by granite rocks, let it wash a shore where wise men dwell, and it is filled with expression […]. (MN : 122)[295]

This is not to claim however, that Barthes understanding of the mytho-poetic process is in contradiction to Emerson's conception; rather the seeming contrast is due to the terminology. In fact what Barthes calls "myth" refers within Emerson's scheme to the process of fossilization, of symbols turning to debilitating concepts that "seem" to possess their own natural essence merely because due to their daily use the human mind has forgotten about their creative agency. The only means that Barthes suggests that avoids such debilitating function of words and concepts is through what he calls "Revolutionary language". By that he means a language that is "operational", transitively linked to its object. He gives an example of a woodcutter, for whom a tree is no longer an image, but the meaning of the activity: "between the tree and myself there is nothing but my labour, that is to say, an action."

> But if I am not a woodcutter, I can no longer 'speak the tree', I can only speak *about* it […]. I no longer have anything more than an intransitive relationship with the tree this tree in no longer the meaning of reality as a human action […].[296]

This rendering of an "operational" language in fact resembles closely Cassirer's description of the mytho-poetic conceptualization and Emerson's own claims about enrapt consciousness. For what Barthes refers to as the language of the "producer", is in Emerson's conception the door to that natural communion, the symbolic expression

[292] Cassirer, 10.
[293] Cassirer, 10.
[294] Cassirer, 31.
[295] EaL.
[296] Barthes, 145.

that animates the world, forming the basis of "Spiritual Laws": "By doing his work [man…] unfolds himself", and in so doing, by revealing his genius,

> […] the quality that differences him from every other, the susceptibility to one class of influences, the selection of what is fit for him, the rejection of what is unfit, determines for him the character of the universe. As a man thinketh, so is he; and as a man chooseth, so is he and so is nature.[297]

Enrapture in the present moment of "being" is in Emerson's scheme of a symbolically unfolding universe Barthes' "Revolutionary Language", for in that instance between man and nature is only his action. "Whenever man speaks in order to transform reality and no longer preserve it as an image"[298] is according to Barthes the authentic expression. Emerson doesn't use the term "Revolution" but "Power" to express the same:

> […] The lightening which explodes and fashions planets, maker of planets and suns, is in him […] [t]he spirit which composes and decomposes nature.[299]

Thus, Emerson would agree with Barthes that the forms of mythical invention reflect not the objective character of things, but the forms of human practices; however man can attain his insight into reality only through this medium of this symbolic, myth-forming process, and is the reason why

> we love the poet, the inventor, who in any form, whether in an ode, or in an action, or in looks and behavior, has yielded us a new thought. He unlocks our chains, and admits us to a new scene. (P: 196)[300]

3.3 THE MEDIUM

The epitome of the transformative, agentive Power is for Emerson the figure of the Poet. To remind once again, for Emerson symbols don't merely *represent* something but *present* reality, therefore when Emerson claims in "The Poet" that "art is the path of the creator to his work," (P: 199)[301] it not only establishes the equality between art and life but simultaneously it presents the "positing" power of that symbolic sentence – the utterance generates that symbolic expression into life,

[297] R.W. Emerson, "Spiritual Laws", EaP, 71.
[298] Barthes, 146.
[299] R.W. Emerson, "Fate", EaL, 953.
[300] EaP.
[301] *Ibid.*

becoming reality. Hence, not only does Emerson presuppose Kenneth Burke's idea of language being a form of "symbolic action" but he goes on to claim "that actions are a kind of words." (P: 184)[302] From this basis emerges Emerson's unique understanding of man's relation to the world and his own comprehension of what it means when said "literature is a social creation"[303].

What has been implied throughout the discussion of Emerson's concept of symbolism is its integral role to social life. Indeed, all Emerson's concerns in his writing with symbolism are formulated on the backdrop of the idea of social change – discharging Emerson's emphasis of the individual importance over society in the evolution of culture and life in general. Already through the model of *Nature* and in the explication of "Circles" Emerson described how his notion of symbols stands for the vehicle of that generating, reviving force that can break through social stagnation and where he formulates his understanding that society itself is formed by these symbolic spheres, which are not permanent but shift correspondingly to the shift of human consciousness:

> The Natural world may be conceived of a system of concentric circles; and we now and then detect in nature slight dislocations, which apprise us that this surface on which we now stand is not fixed, but sliding. These manifold tenacious qualities, this chemistry and vegetation, these metals and animals, which seem to stand there for their own sake, are means and methods only , are *words* [my emphasis] of God […]. (C: 152)[304]

In "The Poet" he stresses that this symbolic power does not have its effect "second hand,"

> [m]an, never so often deceived, still watches for the arrival of a brother who can hold him steady to a truth, until he has made it his own. […] Such is the hope, but the fruition is postponed. Oftener it falls […] and [man loses his] faith in the possibility of any guide who can lead [him] thither where he would be [,] (P: 185)[305]

but instead, must be experienced as a personal *insight* in the moment of its occurrence:

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[302] *Ibid.*
[303] Warren and Wellek, 94.
[304] EaP.
[305] *Ibid.*

> of course, the value of genius to us is in the *veracity* [my emphasis]of its report. Talent may frolic and juggle; genius realizes and adds. (P: 185)[306]

The import of the two ideas combined activated Emerson's intuition that the next phase of humanity, the new social transformation, will require man reliant neither on social constructs nor religious covenants but man who, like his Poet, "in every word he speaks" realizes "he rides on [words] as the horses of thought" (P: 193)[307]. This notion, which he presents in "The Poet", that poetic language should be perceived as an active, formative presence in human life Emerson further confronted in his oration "The Method of Nature" and they come to crest in his essay "Poetry and Imagination". It is also at this point that Emerson's theory of expression foreshadows modern literary theorists' assignment for imagination and fictionalization which shall be discussed towards the end of the section.

Although the exploration of the topic of symbolic expression was an activity that seems almost intuitive to Emerson's own character of expression, where he at ease and with great reach described this power's influence in almost all departments of human life, Emerson did employ great effort on finding a satisfying mode of expression that would encompass this three-act performance of God, Man, Nature that his theory of symbolic expression entailed. His "The Method of Nature" is a summation of this struggle. There he says:

> I do not wish in attempting to paint a man, to describe an air-fed, unimpassioned, impossible ghost. My eyes and ears are revolted by any neglect of the physical facts, the limitations of man. And yet one who conceives the true order of nature, and beholds the visible as proceeding from the invisible, cannot state his thought, without seeming to those who study the physical laws, to do them some injustice. […] Empedocles undoubtedly spoke a truth of thought, when he said, "I am God;" but the moment it was out of his mouth it became a lie to the ear […]. (MN: 118 - 119)[308]

Consequently, Emerson fittingly asks: Who could ever analyze the method of nature? (MN: 119) [309] His answer corresponds with Lévi-Strauss' formulated almost 120 years later (q.v. 1.4 and 4) that *analysis* is already a tapered attitude, and can't grant

[306] *Ibid.*
[307] *Ibid.*
[308] EaL.
[309] EaL.

full service to either man or the world or the divine. Rather the *method* must not stem from the outside reality, but at the origin of its forms - in human consciousness. What facilitated Emerson on his quest for finding a representative method was his attraction to some of the theories of his day that claimed that the source of religious texts, such as the Gospels, was not from a document but an oral tradition. As Barbara Packer points out in her work "Origin and Authority: Emerson and the Higher Criticism",

> [t]he notion that the Gospels had once been a poetic cyclus of orally transmitted legends and apothegms from which each believer was free to make his own selection, the notion that the canon of Scripture was a product of human choice and hence open to human revision[310]

must have resonated strongly with his own disbelief with mediators of faith and knowledge, as represented by the priests and scientists that defraud life by monopolizing all[311]. Instead the oral hypothesis suggested "texts" as self-revelatory "infinitely generous, infinitely generative"[312] based on their immediate experience with the individual "reader". Thus, in light of this developed idea of "revelation" by individual insight, the concept of Book or Text, for example the one of *Nature,* must be understood as a discourse rather than a fixed Word. For since *the method of nature* is a perpetual "emanation" (MN: 119)[313] and man the symbol of its consciousness, the only approach for the way of the world is the "possibility of interpretation"[314]; an interpretation that recognizes man's central role in this Universe's unfolding story both as the reader or "experiencer" of the narration and for being the "experiencer" as the co-author as well, bringing us back to the symbol's double-connotation:

> A man is a center for nature, running out threads of relation through everything, fluid and solid, material and elemental. [315]

Emerson's Poet embodies this particular kind of awareness where reality is not differentiated from experience, but by consciousness' interpretive power reality is interpenetrated - given new meanings corresponding to the emotional bearing of the engaged, provoked moment; in other words, achieving what in the discursive, logical mode of consciousness is impossible: the "identity of the observer with the

[310]Packer, 82.
[311] Packer quoting Emerson's from his "Divinity School Address", 82.
[312] Packer, 82.
[313] EaP.
[314] R.W. Emerson, "Uses of Great Men", EaL, 619.
[315] *Ibid.*, 618.

observed"[316] – the mythic consciousness discussed in the previous section. This "very high sort of seeing, which," Emerson says,

> does not come by study but by the intellect being where and what it sees, by sharing the path, or circuit of things through forms, and so making them translucid to others. (P: 192)[317]

Only by means or action which "stimulate [the] instinct", embodied by the Poet, that arouses the myth-generating consciousness will new passages be opened for us into nature (P: 193)[318] and "it is of the last importance that these things get spoken" (P: 199) [319] :

> What a little of all we know is said! What drops of all the sea of our science are baled up! And by what accident it is that these are exposed, when so many secrets sleep in nature! Hence the necessity of speech and song; hence these throbs and heart-beating in the orator, at the door of the assembly, to the end, namely, that thought may be ejaculated as Logos, or Word. (P: 199)[320]

It is on this plane Emerson converges human action with sacredness and the poetic act with the evolutionary process of nature – not as an activity separate but a medium for it - as this approach to life finds every individual directly answerable to the moral and the practical conduct of life, for such a world-view promotes

> the isolated self only to the extent that by doing its own business, the self can forward the business of everything in the world that is not-self, or all the world's energies-in-realization […].[321]

Hence, his insistence, as Packer also emphasizes, that it is the Poet who above all "needs to acquire the 'habit of saliency, of not pausing but going on'"[322] to be a sort of "conductor of forces"[323] and tap the pockets of the dormant potentialities of what Levin describes, "the relational matrix from which it derives strength and to which it returns that strength"[324].

In this conceptualization, where the imaginative consciousness is identified by its function within the mythological realm that sustains human life, a concept

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[316] *Ibid.,* 619.
[317] EaP.
[318] *Ibid.*
[319] *Ibid.*
[320] EaP.
[321] Levin, 23-24.
[322] Packer, 87.
[323] Suzi Gablic's description of the shaman in Coupe's *The Myth*, 45.
[324] Levin, 27.

Emerson surmised in his "Poetry and Imagination", lies the link between Emerson's ideas of mythopoeia and contemporary theories of fictionalization.

"Poetry and Imagination", almost as long as *Nature,* composed to the end of his life, formulates directly what his previous work has suggested - that his interest in human expression and symbol, and their role in society, is and was in fact "the interest in mythogenic power".[325] It is in this essay that Emerson openly expresses what he only provoked in his earlier works: that the experience of the Divine is possible only *literarily* through Man as a Natural need, by his extended trope of the "intellectual digestion".

When he says in "Poetry and Imagination" that

> Poets are standing transporters, whose employment consists in speaking to the Father and to matter; in producing apparent imitations of unapparent natures, and inscribing things unapparent in the apparent fabrication of the world. (PI: 5)[326]

And -- since the Poet is the epitome of what is shared by all men -- concludes,

> your condition, your employment, is the fable of you. The world is thoroughly anthropomorphized as if it had passed through the body and mind of man, and taken his mould and form. (PI: 6)[327]

he describes that which was already echoed in his oration "The Method of Nature" -- the title suggesting this very same double-implication of the concept of a usage or necessity -- where the "agent man" (method requires an agent) cannot be taken from the meaning, but Nature is in fact the possessor of the meaning. Thus man is doing service to Nature by employing his anthropological faculty for world-conceptualization:

> it is true, he [man] pretends to give account of himself to himself, but, at last, what has he to recite but the fact that there is a Life not to be described or known otherwise than by possession? What account can he give of his essence more than *so it was to be*? […] Oh rich and various Man! Though palace of sight and sound, carrying in their senses the morning and the night and the unfathomable galaxy; […] The individual man is a fruit which it cost all the foregoing ages to form and ripen. The history of the genesis or the old mythology repeats itself in the experience of every child. He too is a demon or god thrown into a particular chaos,

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[325] Richardson, 517.
[326] R.W. Emerson, "Poetry and Imagination,"American Transcendentalism Web, 1. Jun. 2009 <http://www.vcu.edu/engweb/transcendentalism/authors/emerson/essays/poetryimag.html >; hereafter cited in the text as TW.
[327] TW.

> where he strives ever to lead things from disorder into order. Each individual soul is such in virtue of its being a power to translate the world into some particular language of its own; if not into a picture, a stature, or a dance, - why, then into a trade, an art, a science, a mode of living, a conversation, a character, and influence. (MN: 122-123)[328]

In this turn, as he called it, from "Christianity to Consciousness" - collapsing all divine mysteriousness into the relationship between human experience and nature, lead to an over-all translation of sacredness into a morphological phenomena. However, it is very important to keep in mind that through this translation the Spiritual or Divine is not getting lost. It remains as the unstirred given: "the invisible cords", "the poem written before time", "the Divine Reason" to which the agent of human imagination holds up life to see its value and meaning and transforms it to purpose and form. In this "[…] conversion of daily bread into the holiest symbols" (PI: 10)[329] […] "every man would be a poet if his intellectual digestion were perfect" (PI: 10)[330]. It is by means of this extended metaphor that Emerson explains his two-way relationship of man to nature. In one way, man by using his gift of awareness fulfills his role to conceive the divine thoughts of Nature and, on the other hand, nature serves man "to realize the mind" (PI: 7)[331]; everything in the world works together for this ultimate purpose to *express* the Universe/al:

> All the parts and forms of Nature are the expression of production of divine faculties and the same are in us. And the fascination of genius for us is this awful nearness to Nature's creations. (PI: 12)[332]

Consequently, in "Poetry and Imagination" he assigns this faculty to "imagination": the appendage that enables man to be the "eye/I" of the world that recites the episodes of its unfolding narrative: [in him] "the world projects a scribe's hand and writes the adequate genesis." (PI: 12)[333] And hence Emerson's call for the importance of mythology:

> [t]he test of measure of poetic genius Is the power to read the poetry of affairs, - to fuse the circumstance of today […]. 'Tis easy to repaint the mythology of the Greeks, or of the Catholic Church, the feudal castle, the crusade, the martyrdoms of medieval Europe: but to point out where the same creative force is now working in

[328] EaL.
[329] TW
[330] *Ibid.*
[331] *Ibid.*
[332] *Ibid.*
[333] *Ibid.*

> our own houses and public assemblies, to convert the vivid energies acting at this hour in New York and Chicago and San Francisco into universal symbols, requires a subtile and commanding thought. (PI: 10)[334]

This notion of mythopoeia and fictionalization as a human/natural necessity within the dialogue between "experiencer" and the "environment" or "reader" and the "text" is on what modern literary theorists are basing their own formulations in the field, for example as demonstrated in Wolfgang Iser's reader-response theory. Wolfgang Iser in the introduction to his *The Fictive and the Imaginary: Charting Literary Anthropology* goes on to claim that due to the contemporary literature's competition with other media and "the ever-increasing role that these play in our civilization […] literature has lost its significance as the epitome of our culture"[335]. He is asking then: "does literature […] have anything significant left to offer?"[336] For Iser, the fact that despite the tough competition literature still exists signifies that "meeting the pragmatic needs of social life is not everything. […]"[337]. Stripping literature's layers of

> this former, widely accepted forms of its legitimation […] [w]hat then comes into focus is the anthropological equipment of human beings, whose lives are sustained by their imagination.[338]

Iser fundamentally considers "imagination" as a ceaseless, subconscious process and "fictionalization" the rendered prospect out of the "multiplicity of possible outcomes"[339]. In his study Iser attempts to set up a mode of investigation of human self-interpretation through literature, where the fictive and the imaginary constitute the "evidential experiences"[340]. Although Iser does not recast his findings into the grander scope of Nature, the extensive exploration he employs into the subject of fictionalization's anthropological necessity brings out significant parallels to Emerson's theory of expression. Particularly the implications which arise from Iser's stress on fiction being the mirror of human plasticity as the result of human need to be present to ourselves come to suggest Emerson's ideas of the universe being a ceaseless metamorphosis: "The impossibility of being present to ourselves", as Iser

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[334] *Ibid.*
[335] Iser, x.
[336] *Ibid.*
[337] *Ibid.*
[338] *Ibid*, xi,
[339] *Ibid*, 19.
[340] *Ibid*, xiii.

says, "becomes our possibility to play ourselves out to the fullness that knows no boundary […].[341] Here he puts forward the idea resembling Emerson's theory that suggests that it is through the individual's "playing out" his roles in life that can reveal the ultimate significance for human presence. Emerson's states this in his particularly expressive language thus:

> we may, therefore safely study the mind in nature, because we cannot steadily gaze on it in mind; as we explore the face of the sun in a pool, when our eyes cannot brook his direct splendors.(MN: 118)[342]

For both Iser and Emerson it is the faculty of narration and imagination that provide the inlets into this "study" for its ability that Iser called "boundary-crossing"; what we witnessed Emerson perform through his essays *Nature* and "Experience" for example or described in "Circles", which we referred to as the "transitional dynamics" (q.v. 3.1), we have Iser to describe as the ability of the

> fictionalizing act [to] convert the reproduced reality into a sign, simultaneously casting the imaginary as a form that allows us to conceive what it is toward which the sign points. […] Just as the fictionalizing act outstrips the determinacy of the real, so it provides the imaginary with the determinacy that it would not otherwise possess. In doing so, it enables the imaginary to take on an essential quality of the real, for determinacy is a minimal definition of reality.[343]

And indeed Iser uses George Puttenham's term "transitional object" for this fictionalizing act[344] - what Emerson describes as "[t]he endless passing of one element into new form, the incessant metamorphosis," which explain

> the rank which the imagination hold in our catalogue of mental power. The imagination is the reader of these forms. (PI: 4)[345]

And thus Emerson's Poet,

> listens to conversations and beholds all object in Nature, to give back, not them but a new and transcendent whole. (PI: 5)[346]

Emerson's "transcendent" parallels with what modern literary theorists assign to the act of fictionalization:

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[341] *Ibid*, xiv.
[342] EaL.
[343] Iser, 2-3.
[344] Iser, 20.
[345] TW.
[346] *Ibid.*

> transgressing the limits of extratextual systems as well as the boundaries of the text itself by pointing to the referential field that link the text to what is beyond the page.[347]

Specifically to Emerson's technique this is particularly augmented by two factors: first, by the contrast between his essay-form and highly poetic language and secondly, by his emphasis on the import of interlocution. In the case of the former, it was already Vico who explored the distinction between poetic expression on the one hand and discursive prose representation on the other and their effect on the human consciousness. As Hayden White explains, Vico emphasized the tension that creative and active force of the poetic expression and the passive, receptive operation of the prose establish within consciousness itself, "that generates a tendency of thought to transcend itself".[348] The fact that Emerson's style merges prose and poetic language facilitates to produce the unique dynamism explained throughout the preceding sections; however, the "irony" produced by the contradiction leads to a particular problem. Vico considered "irony" as the last stage in the cycle of the development of consciousness where the use of irony indicates the consciousness's awareness of the disparity between language and reality:

> Irony presupposes awareness of the distinction between truth and falsehood, of the possibility of misrepresenting reality in language, and of the difference between a literal and figurative representation.[349]

In fact irony is a trope that points out that all other tropes, particularly metaphors, cease to represent.[350] This brings up a problem, for Emerson's style that employs irony contradicts his theory of expression that constitutes identification between language and experience of reality. To account for this "problem" is to realize the fundamental difference between Vico's and Emerson's conception of the relationship between consciousness and language. Vico thought of the development as cyclical, where each stage of a civilization constitutes a certain necessary form of expression based on the particular development but "over the course of such many cyclical recurrences culture in general is incrementally progressive."[351] Emerson would agree with the latter, where human consciousness takes part, as all nature, in progressive evolution; his emphasis, however, is on the idea that each and every man is a "new

[347] Iser, 19.
[348] White, 203.
[349] White, 206.
[350] Martin Procházka. Email to author. 10 Aug. 2009.
[351] White, 200.

man". Hence, although consciousness is ceaselessly developing, every individual always experiences nature as a new encounter and thus always as Vico's "primitive man" the narratives s/he construct are a representation of a "true" report of reality. Here of course surfaces the essential difference between the two theorists; whereas Vico attempted to provide explanation of the gentile culture's development on the side of the ideal Christian culture, Emerson unzipped Vico's privileged stance of Christianity by translating the Christian's direct revelation to experience itself: where the "true", i.e. real and "false", i.e. imaginary loose their antagonistic charge but are components of the greater whole, which can be revealed only through the transitive discourse which the two form the conditions for. This is very reminiscent of the German Romantics' systems, in particular of Schlegel and Schelling for whom irony, the understanding of life as contradiction, facilitated the process of self-overcoming (q.v. 1.2). Irony in Emerson's case instead of implying contradiction stand for the "limit" of each "generation" of thought (word, man, society) and the new generation which will origin from that ground cannot compare itself to the thought it succeeds because the old becomes part of its own sustenance; thus consequently, the new is the next limit, but not a contradiction or ironic reflection towards the old. This brings us to the second augmentation of Emerson's "transcendent" – the persistent emphasis on the interlocution, where "The Poet must be a rhapsodist: his inspiration a sort of bright casualty" (MN: 126)[352]. Such emphasis rejects "written-down", pre-formulated text; implying it cannot live up to the aspect of the "transcendent", for it already pins something to the ground, hence foreshadowing the development in contemporary literary theory, such that of Iser, of the emphasis on the purpose of "the fictionalizing act": that it

> brings about the presence of the imaginary by transgressing language itself. In outstripping what conditions it, the imaginary reveals itself as the generative matrix of the text.[353]

This implies Emerson's own fundamental assignment to the use of symbolic expression and imagination: the ability to conceive all in the many, essence in the words, mythopoeia in the myths:

[352] EaL.
[353] Iser, 21.

> The universal does not attract us until housed in an individual. Who heeds the waste abyss of possibility?[…]. So must we admire in man, the form of the formless, the concentration of the vast […]. See the play of thoughts! (MN: 122)[354]

In conclusion of this section, it is perhaps interesting to point out the significant link that comes out at this point between Emerson's theory of expression and America's own first "American"[355] mythic story, Melville's *Moby Dick*. Critics claim that in number of ways, *Moby Dick* stands in contrast to Emerson's ideas, particularly to his notion of the self-reliant man, but on many levels the ideas Emerson had concerning text and imagination are further supported by even this *story* that attempts to refute the Emersonian Universe. Martin Procházka in his "Nature in Moby Dick and Emersonian Transcendentalism" says:

> Instead of the central self-reliant man of Emerson's philosophy, the narrator of Melville's Moby Dick appears to be an outcast, living on the margins of society.[356]

And indeed, Ishmael is in many ways an "ironic counterpart of Emersonian self-reliant man"[357], however even the "outcast" through the act of narration/ fictionalization can make *himself* the center of that narrative universe - a life of whales as read through Ishmael's experience –

> If only he *sees*, the world will be visible enough. He need not study where to stand, nor to put things in favorable lights; in him is the light, from him all things are illuminated, to their center. (MN: 123)[358]

At this point it is impending to point out the predominant criticism of Emerson's theory of expression for its anthropocentrism, one that Melville set out himself to challenge. The scope of this study does not permit a full confrontation of this problem; however, it should be recognized that Emerson on a number of occasions in fact stated that the anthropocentrism implied through man's role of being the "eye" of the Universe is an impermanent fact, a transitive part itself in the greater

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[354] EaL.
[355] "American" in the sense that earlier mythic stories and narratives were composed of material significantly still pertinent to the Old World, written by authors either from Europe or with a European outlook, for example as explained in Feldman and Richardson's *The Rise of Modern Mythology* or Malcolm Bradbury's *Dangerous Pilgrimages: Trans-Atlantic Mythologies and the Novel.*
[356] Procházka, Martin, "Nature in *Moby Dick* and Emersonian Transcendentalism": *The Tongue is an Eye: Studies Presented to Libuše Dušková*, ed. Jan Čermák, Aleš Klégr, (Prague, Kruh moderních filologů), 36; hereafter cited in the text as Procházka.
[357] Procházka, 36.
[358] Emerson, "The Method of Nature", 123.

metamorphosis of Life, that the nature humans inhabit "has temporary use [and thus man] "can afford to leave it one day […]" (PI: 1)[359] for

> […] whilst we deal with this as finality, early hints are given that we are not to stay here, that we much be making ready to go. (PI: 1)[360]

Here Emerson is not just implying the certainty of death, but through that passage implies that the growing interest of understanding this quality of man as the "I" of the Universe is the symbol of the very force that impelled it to take that form and thus depictive of Emerson's own progression on the topic of the mythogenic power: "the interest is gradually transferred from the forms to the lurking method." (PI: 2)[361]

It is perhaps not a coincidence then that Emerson's proposal of his "new method", where Nature is understood through the "narrative" of Experience and Experience being the "character" of Nature, predicts some of the important developments taking form in contemporary American scientific community: where the borders between narration and science begin to collapse into one another as the understanding of the universe's cosmology being in fact a perpetual genesis is taking central stage:

> The wholeness we admire in the order of the world, is the result of infinite distribution. Its smoothness is the smoothness of the pitch of the cataract. Its permanence is a perpetual inchoation. Every natural fact is an emanation, and that from which it emanates is an emanation also, and from every emanation is a new emanation. […] (MN: 119)[362]

[359] Poetry and Imagination, 1.
[360] Poetry and Imagination, 1.
[361] Poetry and Imagination, 2.
[362] EaL.

CHAPTER 4: TOWARDS A *NEW* SCIENCE

If Giambattista Vico with his *New Science* set the course for the establishment of the so-called social sciences and for their autonomy in their own right, Ralph Waldo Emerson anticipated through his theory of symbolic expression recourse for the "new science"; a growing interest in the convergence of the human and the natural. It is perhaps not surprising then that most evident manifestation of Emerson's premonition of the necessity of the "new method" has been taking place in the field of modern anthropology.

Lévi-Strauss throughout his career seemed to have tackled the essential problem that characterizes Emerson's work; the desire to learn about "nature" (particularly to Lévi-Strauss' case about other men's nature) "by uncovering its lawful relations among empirical facts"[363], yet accompanied by the realization how much his own subjectivity penetrates into this quest and in fact how much of a necessity that subjectivism is:

> History, politics, the social and economic universe, the physical world, even the sky, all surround me in concentric circles and I can only escape from those circles in thought if I concede to each of the some part of my being. Like the pebble which marks the surface of the wave with circles as it passes through it, I must throw myself into the water if I am to plumb the depths.[364]

This contrasting approach culminated to a certain frustration, as Clifford Geertz describes in his study on Lévi-Strauss, where he felt "to be the victim of a double infirmity: what I see is an affliction to me; what I do not see a reproach."[365] The disappointment signals the shaping of an attitude towards science that dominated and became the main concern of his anthropological study, as he himself explained:

> Science has only two ways of proceeding: it is either reductionist or structuralist. It is reductionist when it is possible to find out what very complex phenomena on one level can be reduced to simpler phenomena on another level. For instance, there is a lot in life which can be reduced to physico-chemical processes, which explain a part but not all. And when we are confronted with phenomena too complex to be reduced to phenomena of a lower order, then we can only approach them by

[363] Geertz, Clifford. "The Cerebral Savage: On the Work of Claude Lévi-Strauss": *The Interpretation of Cultures*, 346; hereafter cited in the text as Geertz.
[364] Lévi-Strauss, as quoted in Geertz's "The Cerebral Savage", 346.
[365] *Ibid*., 350.

> looking to their relationships, that is, by trying to understand what kind of original system they make up.[366]

Or as Clifford Geertz summarized Lévi-Strauss' analytical development:

> [w]hat a journey to the heart of darkness could not produce, an immersion in structural linguistics, communication theory, cybernetics and mathematical logic can. Out of the disappointed romanticism […] arose the exultant sciencism […].[367]

However, it is at this point, in his turn to approaching culture as a sign system, where its constituents are "arbitrary" units and thus the system is only creating meaning when "ordered, by the rules of grammar and syntax […]"[368], that Lévi-Strauss, although inconspicuously, discloses his feelings of incompleteness of this *whole* system. Striking for our discussion is the fact, that his skepticism towards this rationalistic scheme has most been affected by what he learned through his study of myth. In *Myth and Meaning* he goes on to admit the "qualitative aspect of myth" that science has been ignorant of and concludes that,

> [w]hat is important is that we are becoming more and more interested in this qualitative aspect, and that science, which had purely quantitative outlook in the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries, is beginning to integrate the qualitative aspects of reality as well. This undoubtedly will enable us to understand a great many things present in mythological thinking which we were in the past prone to dismiss as meaningless and absurd. And the trend will lead us to believe that, between life and thought, there is not the absolute gab which was accepted as a matter of fact by seventeenth-century philosophical dualism. If we are led to believe that what takes place in our mind is something not substantially or fundamentally different from the basic phenomenon of life itself, and if we are led then to the feeling that there is not this kind of gab which is impossible to over-come between mankind on the one hand and all the other living beings – not only animals, but also plants – on the other, then perhaps we will reach more wisdom, let us say, than we think we are capable of.[369]

It is this that Lévi-Strauss described that Emerson's theory of expression strived to represent – the two-way permeable exchange between nature and man:

> […] all things in Nature, the animals, the mountain, the river, the seasons, wood, iron, stone, vapor, have a mysterious relation to [man's] thoughts and his life; their

[366] Lévi-Strauss, *Myth and Meaning* (London: Routledge, 1978), 7; hereafter cited in the text as Lévi-Strauss.
[367] Geertz, 351
[368] Geertz, 354.
[369] Lévi-Strauss, 19.

> growths, decays, quality and use so curiously resemble himself, in parts and in wholes, that he is compelled to speak by means of them. His words and his thoughts are farmed by their help. Every noun is an image. Nature gives him, sometimes in a flattered likeness, sometimes in caricature a copy of every humor and shade in his character and mind. The world is an immense picture-book of every passage in human life. Every object he beholds is the mask of a man. (PI: 3)[370]

What begins rooted in distinct Cratylism by the end of the passage Nature's projections are processed by man which then are projected back on Nature: "the reception that becomes giving in its turn, as the receiver is only the All-Giver in part and in infancy" (MN: 116)[371]. The over-coming of the gab that Lévi-Strauss described, Emerson achieved by conceiving man to literally be the *organ of interpretation* for this connection and develops a unique trope where human imagination feeds and digests the "surface facts of matter" (PI: 7)[372], which are passed and "melted in Promethean alembic and come out men and then, melted again come out words […]." (PI: 5)[373] The merit of the Poet is this perfect "intellectual digestion" (PI: 10)[374], indeed an act surpassing the Romantics in the attempt to "divine the human and humanize the divine" for here man's most essential biological process is necessitated for divine purpose. It is only when man gets taste of the world, experiences[375] the world that he simultaneously carries out the divine purpose.

An evident example of the stress caused by Lévi-Strauss' limiting scheme to account for the material of his study of human behavior is found in his article on "The Structural Study of Myth". Although persistent in describing the function of myth through a structural system based on the combinatory law of variants, most of the time he is straining the very capacities of that system. This is particularly noticeable in the case he is making for the "bundles of relations". He claims "[that] the true

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[370] TW.
[371] EaL.
[372] TW.
[373] TW.
[374] Ibid.
[375] Emerson might have found the Czech language particularly useful for his purposes, for the verb "zažívat" stands for both: "to digest" and "to experience".

constituent units of myth are not isolated relations but bundles of relations"[376] for, essentially, as he recognizes, myth is not just a first order language system, but

> is [a] language, functioning on an especially high level where meaning succeeds practically at "taking off" from the linguistic ground on which it keep on rolling [and that] its substance does no lie in its style, its original music, or its syntax, but in the *story* [my emphasis] which it tells. [377]

Hence, his stacked "bundles" of comparable relations that are to be "read" as a whole to get at their "harmony" seems like a very wearisome and artificial take at what the myth already appears to provide in its intact composition and to undertake this wearisome analysis only for the sake of a system where the conclusion is that myth is "consisting of all its versions" and it is thus

> possible to organize all the known variants of a myth into a set forming a kind of permutation group, the two variants placed at the far ends being in a symmetrical, though inverted, relationship to each other [,] [378]

reveals to us more about the craftsmanship of logical thought in general than anything of the myth's import.

Therefore, although Lévi-Strauss recognized the quality of myth as a narration that essentially is about the quality and essence due to his own saturation in the inheritance of what Geertz called "the universal rationalism of the French Enlightenment"[379], he, like Barthes (q.v. chapter 3.2), was still not completely "led to believe that what takes place in our mind is something not substantially or fundamentally different from the basic phenomenon of life itself", but was lead to deal with myth, and the other activities of human behavior in general, as the variants of a pre-established ideal base.

The parallel between Emerson's theory of expression and modern scientific approaches forming in America rests in the emerging belief contradicting this unanimity between the experiential and internal reality of man. It is also what signifies the eccentric character of Emerson's transcendentalism. As was emphasized, Emerson's aim to "transcend" the physical and empirical rule over reality was not by soaring heights of abstract metaphysics or to the obscure "peace" of mysticism. His quest for transcending "the paltry idea of experience" did not satisfy by evaluating

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[376] Lévi-Strauss, "The Structural Study of Myth": *Structural Antropology* [*Anthropologie Structurale*, 1958], trans. Claire Jacobson and Brooke C. Schoepfe (New York: Basic Books, 1963), 211.
[377] *Ibid*, 210.
[378] *Ibid*, 223.
[379] Geertz, 356.

some idealized set laws behind experience, for that only accounts, in his term, to "silence". As "better" silence may be, for it represents the absolute understanding of All, "one in all parts,"(C: 151)[380] it is not the *expression* of life; thus venturing to idealist speculations is as improvident as rationalist attempts to understand life without the human agency, i.e. "hunting for life in graveyards" (PI: 3)[381]. Rather, as he emphasized throughout his essay on "Poetry and Imagination", "we sink to rise" (PI: 12)[382]; life is the ceaseless change, the *dialogue* between power and form and only the human mind partaking in that experience, with its gift of perception and speech, is its positing agent. Barbara Packer in her essay supports this through her summation of Emerson's progress to formulating his distinct transcendentalism. She states,

> […] Emerson is finally wearing himself from the concept of origins that had tantalized him for so long. An absolute origin has numinous prestige, but since it is different in essence from the texts which derive from it, its radiance mocks them even as they try faithfully to transmit it. By giving up the search for an origin, by finding radiance in the electricity generated by the differences between tropes rather than in the tropes themselves, Emerson appears to have solved the problem of inspiration- it is not something *in* the text, but something that is generated in its interstices, which is to say, in the reader.[383]

She goes on to explain how he thus begins to be "intrigued by the idea that texts might give rise to inspiration, and not inspiration to texts"[384], which leads then Emerson to conclude that

> the best poet is a 'huge borrower' and that the term "originality" is simply the compliment we pay to the skill of his compilations or the daring of his thefts.[385]

Packer there hints at the most significant result that Emerson's transcendentalism has helped to produce. In contrast to Lévi-Strauss, whose "signs" of reality "reflect neither the time, nor the place, nor the circumstances"[386] Emerson's "symbols" are the products of the interaction of the human agent with his environment, which puts forward the basis of his theory that Levin called an "irreducibly relational identity" where "nothing in nature is truly isolated, including individual selves, but at the same

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[380] EaP.
[381] TW.
[382] *Ibid.*
[383] Packer, 88.
[384] *Ibid.*
[385] *Ibid.*
[386] Geertz, 355.

time the intricate web of nature only works because individual selves accomplish their various, individuated functions"[387]. Although his "theory" emerges from the subjectivist, 'individual self' that individual self conceives of its Self made-up of a particular amalgamation of its environment's mythological depository; hence foreshadowing modernity's understanding that such accounts of the "irreducible individual experiences" are necessary for a more comprehensive understanding of the world. The genius of Shakespeare's art is not, according to Emerson's conception, because he is original, but because his "dazzling originality consisted not in invention, but in assimilation and recasting of the materials accumulated by the culture around him"[388]. Emerson explains that this is a secret that every great man learns,

> that beyond the energy of his possessed and conscious intellect, he is capable of a new energy (as of an intellect doubled on itself) by abandonment to the nature of things; that beside his privacy of power as an individual man, there is a great public power, on which he can draw, by unlocking, at all risks his human doors, and suffering the ethereal tides to roll and circulate through him: then he is caught up into the life of the Universe, his speech is thunder, his thought is law, and his words are universally intelligible as the plants and animals. (P: 193)[389]

It is this that lies behind Emerson's exclamation that Shakespeare worked the miracle of mythologizing the every day[390] and what he meant in "Method of Nature" when he said "the only way into Nature is to enact our best insight" (MN: 131)[391].

This concept of the human experience providing the insight into objective reality is directly related to the mythic conception. For as has been demonstrated the mythic conception is about the concentration into the present moment and that concentration depends on the direction of the particular's subjects interest. Using again words of Ernst Cassirer's explanation:

> whatever appears important for our acting and willing our hope and anxiety, for acting and doing that and only that receives the stamp of verbal "meaning"[392]. […] For only what is related somehow to the focus point of willing and doing, only what proves to be essential to the whole scheme of life and activity, is selected

[387] Levin, 31.
[388] Packer, 89.
[389] EaP
[390] See reference no. 178.
[391] EaL.
[392] Cassirer, 37.

> from the uniform flux of sense impressions, and is "noticed" in the midst of them […][393].

Cassirer uses the example of Hermann Karl Usener' study of Roman gods to illustrate this point:

> Usener has shown us through the examples of the Roman 'functional gods' […] that 'all their deities are entirely practically conceived, so to speak- conceived as being effective in those things which the Roman deal in his ordinary life; the local environment in which he moved, the various occupations in which he engaged, the occasions that determine and shape the life of the individual as well as the community – all these things are in the keeping of clearly conceived gods with definitely recognized powers[…].[394]

Thus, just as the formation of gods stems from a direct outcome of man's experience so are all other words and concepts and behavior the result of man's experience objectified into symbolic expressions. It is this that Emerson described as the "sacred", the mystery, the Power that puts forward this expression in nature and necessitates men to turn to such expression:

> Every line we can draw in the sand has expression; and there is no body without its spirit or genius. All form is an effort of character; all condition, of the quality of the life;[…] The beautiful rests on the foundations of the necessary. (P: 186)[395]

This which Emerson finds as the convergence of art and essentiality transmits his belief that the only way to cultivate this sacred communion is for individuals *to be present* and *to present* their experience in order to put forward the unfolding narrative.

An epitome example how Emerson's "intellectual digestion" can serve as a method for both scientific account and inquiry is the *interpretative* method of Clifford Geertz's anthropological work. For Geertz the understanding that symbols guide action and human behavior constitutes the basis of his scientific approach. He considers doing ethnography for the same process as reading a manuscript.[396] Thus striking a parallel with Emerson concerning "text's" identity:

> Though ideational, it does not exist in someone's head; though unphysical, it is not an occult entity. […]Once human behavior is seen as […] symbolic action […] the question as to whether culture is patterned conduct or a frame of mind, or even

[393] Cassirer, 38.
[394] Cassirer, 36-37.
[395] EaP.
[396] Geertz, 10.

> mixed together, loses sense. […] The thing to ask is what their import is […] in their occurrence and through their agency, is getting said.[397]

Consequently, Geertz, similarly to what Emerson voiced as the intention of the "The Poet" that, "the chief value of the 'new fact' is to enhance the great and constant fact of Life", claims that, "the aim of anthropology is the enlargement of the universe of human discourse"[398] by trying to form "fictions" (stresses the original term of *fictio* as meaning something "made" or "fashioned") of the imaginative/symbolic realm posited by other people. For, he asserts,

> what [in a foreign place] most prevents [us] from grasping what people are up to is not ignorance as to how cognition works as a lack of familiarity with the imaginative universe which their acts are signs.[399]

Geertz's anthropological endeavor resembles those of the mediating Poet, where through his proposed "interpretation" of the symbols "[m]en have really got a new sense, and found within their world another world, or nest of worlds […]" (P: 194)[400]. Moreover, for Geertz the important part of understanding culture is to interpret its symbols based on the experience that it derives from, that includes the people, the person, the environment, the time, because as he says,

> there is little profit in extricating a concept from psychologism only to plunge it immediately into those of schematicism.
>
> Behavior must be attended to, and with some exactness, because it is through the flow of behaviour – or, more precisely, social action – that cultural form find articulation.[401]

Geertz here stresses the limitation of the structuralists' (rationalists' in general) approaches to symbols. He disagrees that merely the intrinsic relationships between symbols can grasp human activities, claiming that

> Whatever, or wherever, symbol system 'in their own terms' may be, we gain empirical access to them by inspecting events, not by arranging abstracted entities into unified patterns.[402]

Furthermore, he claims that such structuralists' systems' assertions to coherence actually speak against their validity, for

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[397] *Ibid.*
[398] *Ibid*, 14.
[399] *Ibid*, 13.
[400] EaP.
[401] Geertz,17.
[402] *Ibid.*

> [n]othing has done more, I think, to discredit cultural analysis than the construction of impeccable depictions of formal order in whose actual existence nobody can quite believe.[403]

Similarly to what Martin Procházka referred to as the "reversal of the hierarchy of text and commentary"[404] that takes place in *Moby Dick* -- a turnaround essential to Emerson's theory -- Geertz also attacks the widespread notion of the supremecy of formal, "authorative" texts in their claim to "truth". Instead, Geertz's proposal of his "thick description" emphasizes the need for an interpretation that "construct[s] a *reading* [my emphasis] of what happens"[405], for

> to divorce it from what happens – from what, in this time or that place, specific people say, what they do, what is done to them, from the whole vast business of the world – is to divorce it from its application and render it vacant.[406]

His study and account of Balinese life reflects the implementation of this concentrated interpretation. Just as a fervent story-teller, Geertz sets the context, introduces the characters, and reveals his own disposition towards the milieu he observes. The vividness of the account and rendering of details in attempt to invoke the atmosphere of that particular environment is what gets the readers to imaginatively be present in the "story". Only by "being there" and experiencing the moment does the reader "understand" the implications of the social relations and human behavior, for humans can only really grasp new knowledge by emotional involvement or rapture – that activity performed by Emerson in his own essays and described by Cassirer of becoming objectified to a new form (q.v. chapter 3.2). Hence, in light of Emerson's claim that

> […] as the power of genius of nature is ecstatic, so must its science or the description of it be [,] (MN: 126)[407]

Geertz *literally* illustrates this "door opening" to new knowledge gained through narrative interpretation by his inclusion of a dramatic account of him and his wife being part of an Indonesian police raid:

> It was the turning point so far as our relationship to the community was concerned, and we were quite literally 'in'. The whole village opened up to us, probably more than it ever would have otherwise […]. Getting caught, or almost caught, in a vice

[403] *Ibid.*,18.
[404] Procházka, 42.
[405] Geertz,18.
[406] *Ibid.*
[407] EaL.

> raid is perhaps not a very generalizable recipe for achieving that mysterious necessity of anthropological field work, rapport, but for me it worked very well. It led to a sudden and unusually complete acceptance into a society extremely difficult for outsiders to penetrate. It gave me the kind of immediate, inside-view grasp of an aspect of 'peasant mentality' that anthropologists not fortunate enough to flee headlong with their subject from armed authorities normally do not get. And, perhaps most important of all […] it put me very quickly on to a combination of emotional explosion, status war, and philosophical drama of central significance to the society whose inner nature I desired to understand.[408]

Not only is the account an illustration of an example from life how participation in experiences affects our knowledge of the world, but the very account on its textual level works as a symbol for those very experiences. Most of the events/activities that Geertz describes in his narratives possess this double "life", where on their initial level they are the symbols of the "living" symbols in forms of actions that posit a certain reality and hence then can function at their second, textual level as the mediating symbols of that reality in the imaginative realm of the text. Thus, similarly to Emerson's style, the tropes of the account become "performative". As in *Nature* where Emerson achieved through his tropes to create the very composition of *Nature* being the becoming of the myth, or the "theory of Experience" to literally eat-itself up through the very account of "Experience", Geertz narrative achieves the same effect, for his symbols function on the same level of positing an unfolding action, where the reader does not merely obtain an analogy of a reality, but perceives the unfolding of the reality in the dynamics of the language of the text - what Cassirer described as the

> point where the word which denotes that thought content is not a merely conventional symbol but is merged with its objects in an dissoluble unity The conscious experience is no merely wedded to the word, but is consumed by it. Whatever has been fixed by a name, henceforth is not only real, but is Reality .[409]

Exemplified also by Iser, who on this point supports fiction's value and import to knowledge as important as other sources:

> Fiction operates in actual worlds in much the same way as nonfictions. Cervantes and Bosch and Goya, no less than Boswell and Newton and Darwin, take and unmake and

[408] Geertz, 417.
[409] Cassirer, 58.

> remake and retake familiar worlds, recasting them in remarkable and sometimes recondite but eventually recognizable – i.e. *re-cognizable*- ways.[410]

Here, echoing Emerson's remark that "science does not know its debt to imagination" (PI: 3)[411], in other words, the Poet's ability to not merely invent but recast the world in a *meaningful,* up to date projection:

> All that is wondrous in Swedenborg is not his invention, but his extraordinary perception; - that he was necessitated so to see. The world realizes the mind. (PI: 6)[412]

Geertz provides his own explanation of this "point" on the level of behavior/action, through his explication of the village cockfights in Bali:

> Its function, if you want to call it that, is interpretive: it is a Balinese reading of Balinese experience, a story they tell themselves about themselves. […]
>
> […] To treat the cockfight as a text is to bring out a feature of it […] that treating it as a rite or pastime […] would tend to obscure: its use of emotion for cognitive ends.[413].

As was René Wellek's reaction to Emerson's composition: "criticism can only be empathy and identification"[414], for Geertz that is of the same importance, for he stresses that such accounts - the highlighting of the "complex specificness", the "circumstantialities" of human activities" -

> give the sort of sensible actuality that makes it possible to think not only realistically and concretely about them, but what is more important creatively and imaginatively with them.[415]

In another of his studies Geertz explains the human mind as essentially "dispositional", that

> [w]hen we attribute mind to organism, we are talking about neither the organism's actions nor its products per se, but about its capacity and its proneness, its disposition, to perform certain kinds of actions and produce certain kinds of products […].[416]

Here Geertz is reciting what for Emerson was the encompassing matter of his interest: the spirit, power, utility assigned to men, being "the necessary actor" whose performance "[...] infuses a certain volatility and intoxication into All Nature" (PI:

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[410] Iser, 162.
[411] TW.
[412] *Ibid.*
[413] Geertz, 448.
[414] *A History of Modern Criticism, vol. III*, 172.
[415] Geertz,23.
[416] Geertz, 59.

5)[417] and concurrently corresponding to Iser's literary anthropology that asserts that narrative-building serves man to explore the

> complexities of action [through its] imaginary constructs that set free possibilities inherent in situations and does not pin them down to any pre-given conditions[418].

They both reaffirm Emerson's rejection of and disbelief in all pre-formulated "texts" for experience is the unfolding Text in need of constant, up to date interpretation, to see:

> [o]ur logrolling, our stumps and their politics, our fisheries, our Negroes, and Indians, our boats, and our repudiations, the wrath of rogues, and the pusillanimity, of honest men, the northern trade, the southern planting, the western clearing, Oregon and Texas, are yet unsung. Yet America is a poem in our eyes; its ample geography dazzles the imagination, and it will not wait long for metres. (P: 198)[419]

Hence, symbolic expression is for both Geertz and Emerson the medium for this "capacity and proneness", for it is not concerned with existential phenomenon alone neither merely with the isolated subject but is the process of "boundary-crossing" (q.v. 3.4) the two set to motion and that infuse life with new and "deeper but never definite or absolute meanings."[420] Hence, Geertz could speak for both of them when he claims:

> To look at symbolic dimensions of social action – art, religion, ideology, science, law, morality, common sense – is not to turn away from the existential dilemmas of life for some empyrean realm of de-emotionalized forms; it is to plunge into the midst of them.[421]

[417] TW.
[418] Iser, 127
[419] EaP.
[420] Levin, 6.
[421] Geertz, 30.

CONCLUSION

In his work *Dangerous Pilgrimages* Malcolm Bradbury demonstrates to what extent from the very beginnings "boundary crossing" has informed not only the American sensibility and imagination, but reality itself. In the very process of America's discovery its narrative has already been unfurling – "in the search of freedom, the hope of opportunity, the hunger for wealth […]"[422], the physical voyages were accompanied with the "journeys of the imagination, a flourishing traffic in fancy, fiction, dream and myth"[423] – indeed "arriving" in America even before leaving. From such a history it is hardly a surprise that America would initiate a truly serious inquiry into the value of the mythopoeic consciousness. The New World has become the epitome of how fictionalization constitutes reality and commands human action, and progressively becoming recognized as an indispensable faculty of the human physiology. Hence, America not only being the scene for the emergence of a *new* myth, it is also the scene of an emerging *new scienc*e of the *new man*, "the symbol using animal"[424].

The first American thinker that directly confronted this issue of mythopoeic power over man and over life, investigating its uncharted territory, was R.W. Emerson, and indeed his own exploration proving, in true sense of the term, a "dangerous pilgrimage". For what has begun as a mission in search of an authentic relationship between man and God took him by each step further into exploring the interaction between man and nature instead. However, this didn't accumulate to a rejection of spirituality; on the contrary, it stimulated his inquiry further for his attraction to the special union man shares with nature compared to the other creatures – a union embodied by symbolic expression. In turn to the European Romantics for a sense of confirmation for his intuitive attraction to the power of symbolism and poetic language, he began to chart his own "theory" that extended beyond the Romantics' call for a new mythology. Emerson's far-reaching investigation into the workings of myth and symbols unveiled for him its paradoxical nature: at the time it creates it is

[422] Bradbury, Malcolm. *Dangerous Pilgrimages: Trans-Atlantic Mythologies and the Novel* (New York: Penguin Books, 1996), 1.
[423] *Ibid.*
[424] A term used by Kenneth Burke in *Language as Symbolic Action.*

on the way to debilitate, and when it breaks it entails the power of creativity. Hence, his initial faith for his private belief and skepticism towards deceptive constructs of society converged into his lifetime interest in the mythopoeic power. It is this interest that instigated and exalted his theories, concerning spirituality, man, nature, society, experience, poetics; indeed demonstrating the power of myth's "transitive unifier".

His unique conception of the "transcendent" that *literally* merges the human with the divine cause and simultaneously the human with the natural instigated a necessary recognition of the value and *purpose* of the fictional and imaginary for human life. Hence, Emerson's exploration of this topic, which has not only been expressed through his ideas, but demonstrated through his writing style, anticipated contemporary literary and scientific communities' emerging interest in the mythopoeic act of "bringing possibility over into the realm of being"[425] and what it *means* to man in his interaction with the world. For Emerson that utility provided him with the fruit of his endeavor: man's authentic experience of the sacred. Through his inquiry of the mythopoeic act he came to recognize that it is exactly man's unique interaction with the natural world -- man's experience of the world-- that unveils to man God's *Word* and it is man's necessity to keep reading the Divine narrative, the perpetual genesis, as it unfolds; for "what is a man but nature's finer success in self-explication?"[426]

In effect, Emerson proposed a genuinely "modern Myth", modern not only in the sense that it is "new", but modern by embodying the very power to surpass what the modern, rational mind has come to regard as the limiting, dangerous facet of the human consciousness. In a sense, he de-mythologized myth in order to put forward the new mythology: the old being the exponent to the new thought.

[425] Bodmer and Bretinger, as quoted in Abrams' *The Mirror and the Lamp*, 288
[426] R.W. Emerson, "Art", EaP,169.

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CZECH ABSTRACT
Souhrn v českém jazyce

V rámci moderní literární kritiky a amerických kulturních studií se dílo R.W. Emersona přednostně považuje za prototyp pragmatické teorie a také se tak klasifikuje. Přílišný důraz na to, že Emerson předpověděl americký pragmatismus, ovšem ve skutečnosti zastiňuje zrod těchto idejí, které původně ve své podstatě ztělesňují ideu „přerodu".

Významný je fakt, že se Amerika zrodila ve věku rozumu, a že se na počátku devatenáctého století postavila do čela technologického pokroku, čímž vykročila ke svým pragmatickým, moderním snahám, ale byl zde i další významný činitel, který hrál určující roli ve formování „modernosti": její přímé setkání s fikčně vábivým prostorem "nového světa". Tyto dva faktory způsobily dramatickou změnu vědomí. Nové a pozměněné perspektivy světa si žádaly nový vztah člověka k jeho prostředí, čímž iniciovaly přesun původních idejí do nových představ. Jinými slovy daly vzniknout novým pohledům na svět a novým mýtům. Uznává se, že Emerson byl důležitou částí této „přetvářející" činnosti, důležitější ovšem je, že si to postupně začal uvědomovat i on sám, a tudíž vážně zkoumal pojetí mýtotvorné síly jak ve své práci, tak v lidském životě obecně. Z toho důvodu je jediná interpretace jeho souhrnného díla v protikladu k jeho ambici formulovat fungování mýtu a jeho přerodné schopnosti. Tato studie se pokouší odhalit Emersonův text ve světle jeho mýtotvorného zájmu a demonstrovat, že v jeho díle byla jednotnost stejně důležitá jako mnohost, ustrnutí stejně jako akce, protože stojí v cestě přeměny, kterou, jak Emerson věřil, mýtotvorba prochází. Navíc se tato studie snaží nastínit, – za účelem zdůraznění – do jaké míry jeho vlastní teorie mýtotvorného a symbolického vyjadřování předjímala rostoucí uvědomění důležitosti mýtického a imaginativního vyjadřování samotné Ameriky a lidské zkušenosti.

Výklad diplomové práce se soustředí na Emersonovy eseje, protože v této formě vyprávění byl Emerson nejlépe schopen prozkoumávat a demonstrovat mýtotvornou funkci, a to nejen skrze dosah a důležitosti jejich významu, ale také skrze stylistické a expresivní ztvárnění na textovém povrchu/textové rovině. Eseje *Nature* a "Experience" byly vybrány, aby posloužily jako hlavní modely pro

předvedení Emersonova zkoumání mýtotvorné funkce, jelikož nejenže dobře reflektují Emersonovy vlastní vyvíjející se představy o mýtu, ale také představují ztělesnění dvojí konotace mýtotvorby: je ničivá i osvobozující ve své podstatě. Jiné eseje, jež byly zahrnuty do studie, jsou ty, které jsou důležité v rámci vysledování Emersonova progresivního vývoje této jeho teorie symbolického vyjádření: "Circles" z jeho *Essays*, "The Poet" a "Nature" z jeho *Essays Second Series* a "Poetry and Imagination" – nepříliš známé dílo, mající však velký přínos pro tuto studii. Dále tvoří významnou část práce také Emersonova řeč "Method of Nature". Svými důležitými náhledy do mýtotvorného tématu podporuje tvrzení vytvořená na základě esejí. Další podpora a argumenty byly čerpány z Emersonových soukromých spisů. Jako spisovatel byl Emerson plodný a jeho deníkové zápisky, dopisy a jiné, méně relevantní eseje jsou důležitými materiály pro studium této problematiky.

Kapitola 1. podává přehled definicí mýtu a chápání mýtu v moderní literární kritice a filozofii a uvádí hlavní problémy a debaty související s tématem ve světle Emersonova vlastního bádání. Kapitola zdůrazňuje, že určení „mýtu" není jednoduché, protože tento výraz zdá se získal platnost pro řadu různorodých definic. Například pro F. Maxe Müllera je mýtický svět v podstatě světem iluze, která je způsobená vrozenou vadou jazyka [427] - "chorobou jazyka" [428], pro německé romantiky však představuje naopak nejvyšší formu pravdy[429]. Navíc již od dob Nietzscheovy filozofie dospěla tato předpokládaná antinomie fikce a pravdy jako takové k radikálnímu opětovnému přezkoumání. Proto jediným způsobem, jak dospět ke vhodnému pojetí „mýtu", je nechápat ho jako něco, co definuje jediný neměnný pojem, ale jako zvláštní stav vědomí, který se nevymezuje kontrapozicí opačných pólů „smyšlenosti" a "reality" (tato opozice, jak například Wolfgang Iser podotýká ve svém díle *The Fictive and the Imaginary: Charting Literary Antropology,* již implikuje jistý stupeň mytologizace), ale interakcí obou. První kapitola probírá nejpodstatnější teorie týkající se tohoto měnícího se tématu mytologie v rámci literárních studií a filozofie. Začíná diskuzí o hlavní roli, kterou mýtus hraje v evropském romantickém hnutí hlavně pro německé a anglické romantiky a vymezením míry, do jaké Emerson sám sebe mohl utvrzovat ve svých přesvědčeních

[427] Cassirer, Ernst. *Language and Myth*, přel. Susanne K. Langer (New York: Dover Publications, 1953), 7.
[428] Feldman, B., Richardson, R.D. *The Rise of Modern Mythology 1680-1860* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1972), 481.
[429] *Ibid*., 303.

a teoriích v programu romantiků. Diskuze se poté přesouvá k dílu Giambattisty Vica, protože to byl právě on, kdo jako první pojal mýtus jako autonomní téma a stál u základů snahy o „Novou vědu“ – otočení vědeckého bádání „dovnitř“. Tím, že položil základy pro spojení těchto dvou zdánlivých protikladů, předejmul Vico pozdější přístupy k mytologii – implicitně v případě romantiků, jako například u Schellingova and Schlegelova „psychofyzického paralelismu“ [430] jejich systémů, obzvláště však v případě moderních přístupů, jako například Jungova psychologického přístupu, psycholingvistických studií Ernsta Cassirera, filozofie „As-If“ Hanse Vaihingera, mýtu jako sémiologického systému u Rolanda Barthese a Claude Lévi-Strausse a teorie kultury Clifforda Geertze, jež jsou výsledkem tendence „naturalizovat nadpřirozeno a polidšťovat božské.[431] Emersonovy vlastní teorie vycházely z tohoto tématu a přispívaly k jeho nevyčerpatelnému proudu. Přehled těchto souvisejících teorií se pokouší stanovit kulturně-literární kontext mýtu, aby sloužil jako pozadí, na kterém je možné sledovat jeho vlastní dynamiku. Podstatným faktem, který první kapitola zdůrazňuje od začátku do konce a který je důležitý pro další diskuzi o Emersonově mýtotvorbě, je to, že Mýtus má schopnost být zároveň mýtoborný a mýtotvorný a měnící se přístup vědomí ke vztahu mezi „mýtem” a „realitou” demonstruje přeměnu a složitosti mytologizující aktivity samotné.

Kapitola 2. se zabývá postupným vývojem Emersonova zájmu o mýtus a mytologii. První část demonstruje, jak už v raném věku byl fascinován osvobozující, a přitom svazující silou víry, a zabývá se smíšenými pocity, které Emerson měl vůči moderním racionálním přístupům ke světu. Tato distinktivní směs víry a skepse udala směr jeho pozdějšímu prozkoumávání mýtotvorné schopnosti. Druhá kapitola též situuje Emersona v kontextu dramaticky se měnícího světa kolem něj. Není tedy náhodné, ale naopak spíše historicky symbolické, že ve chvíli, kdy Emerson rozvíjel svůj postoj vůči identitě, víře a autoritám, procházela i Amerika jako národ přerodem vědomí. Díky své citlivé a pronikavé mysli Emerson chápal, že neexistuje adekvátní *vypravěčský postup* pro obyvatele Ameriky devatenáctého století, kteří „bojovali, aby se dokázali orientovat v kosmu alarmujících nových rozměrů“[432]. „Zkušenost

[430] výraz užitý M.H.Abramsem v jeho *The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition.* (New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 1958), 52.

[431] M.H Abrams, *The Natural Supernaturalism: Tradition and Revolution in Romantic Literature* (New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 1971), 67.

[432] Roger Lundin, *From Nature to Experience: The American Search for Cultural Authority* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2005),100.

každého nového věku si žádá nového přiznání a svět se zdá vždy být v očekávání svých básníků"[433] - tento Emersonův výrok nejen vyjádřil onu absenci, ale zároveň i autorovu odhodlání tuto mezeru vyplnit a odpovědnost, kterou za to pociťoval. V reakci na to, co považoval za prázdnotu americké představivosti způsobenou neschopností vysvětlit „nová fakta" vyvstanuvší z Nového světa, položil ve své eseji *Nature* tuto otázku: „Proč bychom si neměli […] užívat originálního vztahu k vesmíru?"[434] Položení této otázky bylo činem v souladu s analogií Nového světa Sacvana Bercovitche – „moderní svět" jako ztělesnění „moderního mýtu"[435], definující americký přístup k tvorbě mýtu. Jeho pojetí návrhu nového mýtu vyplynulo z jeho pečlivého studia moci této schopnosti. Pokud Amerika byla v té době mezníkem pro přerod lidského vědomí, zatímco se postupně stala „moderním světem", je pochopitelné, že její mytologie odráží sílu tohoto „přerodu". Emersonův zájem o mýtus a odpor k němu se spíše než do tvorby nových mýtů rozvinul do „zájmu o mýtotvornou sílu" [436]. Pro něj je „umění […] v procesu. Konečný produkt značí konec, smrt [...], bod, ve kterém nastane zkostnatění"[437]. Slovy Jonathana Levina: „více se zajímal o způsob, jak věříme a pochybujeme – reálný proud prožívání, než o systém víry nebo systematicky udržovanou skepsi"[438]. Kapitola se poté detailně opírá o Emersonova díla, která nejlépe reprezentují mýtotvornou schopnost, tedy o *Nature* a „Experience". Přestože jsou tato díla kritiky nejčastěji považována za sobě si odporující, výklad těchto textů ve světle mýtotvorného vyjádření odhaluje, že ve skutečnosti se jedno druhého zastává a odráží Emersonovu celoživotní fascinaci tajemnou, ustavičnou mocí, která utváří a upevňuje myšlenky, aby je následně opět rozmělnila.

Třetí kapitola se věnuje dvojité konotaci, kterou Emerson nachází v mýtotvorné síle a jejím vztahu vůči užívání jazyka a symbolů. Tato kapitola demonstruje, jak zájem o mýtotvorbu zformoval Emersonovu konkrétní teorii vyjadřování, a sleduje tento vývoj na základě jeho esejí pojednávajících o jazyce a

[433] Ralph Waldo Emerson,"The Poet," *Essays and Poems*, vybráno Tony Tannerem (London: J.M. Dent, 1995), 185.
[434] Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Nature" *Essays and Lectures*, vybráno Joel Portem (New York: Library of America, 1983), 7.
[435] Bercovitch, Sacvan. "The Myth of America." *Literaria Pragensia vol.13, no. 25*, vybráno Ondřejem Pilným (Praha: Univezita Karlova, 2003), 22.
[436] Robert D. Richardson Jr., *Emerson – The Mind on Fire* (Berkley: University of California Press, 1995), 517.
[437] *Ibid*, 372.
[438] Jonathan Levin, *The Poetics in Transition* (London: Duke University Press, 1999), 18.

symbolickém vyjadřování, z nichž jsou nejdůlažitějšími "Circles", "The Poet" a "Poetry and Imagination". Dále tato kapitola ukazuje, jak Emersonova vlastní teorie vyjadřování (obzvláště myšlenka, že lidské prožívání, na rozdáíl od empirických věd, povoluje skrze zprostředkovatelskou sílu symbolického vyjadřování průnik do objektivní reality) odkazuje na teorie lingvistů a filozofů přímo se zabývajících mýtem a mýtotvorným povědomím. Kapitola se primárně zaměřuje na Ernsta Cassirera, Rolanda Barthese a Wolfganga Isera. Emersonovo unikátní pojetí „transcedence," o které Emerson také referoval jako o „intelektuálnímu zažítku," *doslova* spojuje lidskou podstatu s božskou, a zároveň lidskou s přirozenem a podnítilo nutné poznání hodnoty a *účelu* fikce a imaginárního v lidském životě. Z toho důvodu předjímalo Emersonovo prozkoumávání tohoto tématu, které nejenže bylo vyjádřeno jeho idejemi, ale také demonstrováno jeho literárním stylem, vzrůstající zájem současné literární a vědecké komunity o mýtotvorný akt "přenesení možnosti do sféry bytí"[439] a co tento akt *znamená* pro člověka v jeho interakci se světem.

Paralela mezi Emersonovou teorií vyjadřování a moderními vědeckými postupy vytvářenými ve Spojených Státech leží ve vzrůstající víře v jednotu prožívané a interní reality člověka. Pokud Giambattista Vico svou *Novou vědou* udal směr pro založení takzvaných společenských věd a pro jejich vlastní autonomii, Ralph Waldo Emerson svou teorií symbolického vyjadřování předjímal přesměrování „nové vědy" a rostoucí zájem o propojení lidského a přírodního. Asi tedy není překvapivé, že nejzjevnější projev Emersonovy předtuchy nutnosti „nové metody" je patrný v rámci moderní antropologie. Poslední kapitola ukazuje vztah mezi Emersonovou snahou najít vhodný popis „nové zkušenosti" člověka a vzrůstajícím zájmem vědecké komunity současné Ameriky o splývání vyprávěčských postupů a empirismu. Příkladem, jak Emersonovo „intelektuální vnímání", probrané v předchozí kapitole, může sloužit jako metoda jak pro vědecké zkoumání, tak pro popis, je *interpretační* metoda antropologické práce Clifforda Geertze. Základam Geertzova vědeckého přístupu je jeho přesvědčení, že symboly vedou činnost a lidské chování. Považuje etnografii za stejný proces jako čtení textů.[440] Symbolické vyjádření pro Geertze i Emersona představuje médium pro jedinečnou vlastnost

[439] Bodmer a Bretinger, z citace v Abramsově *The Mirror and the Lamp*. 288.
[440] Clifford Geertz, "Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture": *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 10.

„schopnosti/sklonů“ člověka a jeho hodnotu nacházejí se v samotné jeho povaze: že se nezabývá samotným existenčním fenoménem a ani nepojednává o jednotlivici jako izolovaném předmětu, ale že je procesem „překračování hranic“, který tyto dva uvádějí v pohyb a vlévají do života nové a “hlubší, ale nikdy ne konečné či absolutní významy.”[441] Emersonův dalekosáhlý průzkum fungování mýtu a symbolů mu odhalil jeho paradoxní podstatu: ve chvíli, kdy stvoří, zároveň již zeslabuje, a ve chvíli zlomu nastává spojení se silou kreativity. Proto se jeho původní důvěra ve svou víru a jeho skepse vůči klamným konstruktům společnosti soustředily v jeho celoživotním zájmu v mýtotvornou sílu. Právě tento zájem inicioval i dovršil jeho teorie týkající se duchovna, člověka, přírody, společnosti, lidské zkušenosti, poetiky. Skutečně demonstruje sílu „tranzitivního unifikátora“[442]. *Využití* mýtu přineslo Emersonovi výsledky jeho snahy o autentickou zkušenost posvátna. Průzkumem mýtotvorného aktu došel k poznání, že je to právě ona unikátní interakce člověka s přirozeným světem (zkušenost člověka na ve světě), která mu odhaluje *Slovo* boží, a že je pro něj nutností nadále číst božské vyprávění, trvalou genesis, tak, jak se odvíjí. Protože „co je člověk jiného než úspěšnější sebevysvětlení přírody“[443]? V důsledku navrhl Emerson skutečně „moderní Mýtus“, jenž je moderní nejen v tom smyslu, že je „nový“, ale také proto, že je ztělesněním samotné schopnosti předstihnout to, co moderní, racionální mysl začala považovat za omezující; nebezpečnou stránku lidského vědomí. V jistém smyslu demytologizoval mýtus, aby mohl představit mytologii novou; stará myšlenka stoupencem nové.

[441] Jonathan Levin, *The Poetics in Transition* (London: Duke University Press, 1999), 6.
[442] Termín Kennetha Burka z *Language as Symbolic Action: Essays on Life, Literature, and Method.* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968).
[443] R.W. Emerson, “Art” *Essays and Poems*, vybráno Tony Tannerem (London: J.M. Dent, 1995), 169.